NATION

Tiger found dead in MP's Bandhavgarh

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BUSINESS

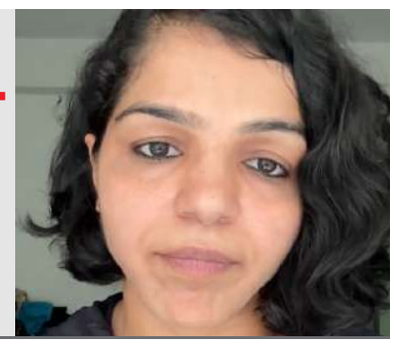
Markets bleed Rs 17L cr after PM's austerity appeal

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

WFI blocking Vinesh's comeback: Sakshi

≫ Page: 8 ≪



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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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NEET-UG cancelled after paper leak, angry students hit the street

'Guess paper' with 410 questions shared on WhatsApp; CBI files FIR; 1 detained

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

The NEET-UG 2026 examination held on 3 May was cancelled on Tuesday following allegations of a paper leak, with the CBI registering an FIR after the Centre ordered a comprehensive probe into the irregularities.

The National Testing Agency (NTA) said fresh dates for the medical entrance examination would be announced within the next seven to 10 days.

The cancellation sparked outrage among medical aspirants across the country, with students questioning the NTA's credibility and demanding that the examination be conducted by All India Institute of Medical Sciences. Protests were held by NSUI, SFI and other student groups in several cities.

CBI registered a case involving criminal conspiracy, cheating, breach of trust, theft, destruction of evidence, offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act and the Public Examination Prevention of Unfair Means Act, 2024. Multiple special teams were dispatched to various locations.

The controversy began after suspected malpractice was reported from Rajasthan and Uttarakhand following the examination. Investigators said a "guess paper" containing nearly 410 questions had circulated among students days before the test, with around 120 questions from Chemistry and Biology allegedly matching the actual paper.

Authorities claimed the material had been shared through WhatsApp groups around 42 hours before the examination.

The Rajasthan Police's Special Operations Group launched an inquiry after reports of "striking similarities" between the circulated material and the exam paper. Additional Director General Vishal Bansal said investigators were examining whether the material was merely a test series or part of a larger organised cheating racket.

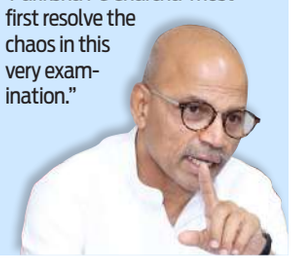
In Nashik, Maharashtra, one man was detained and is expected to be handed over to Rajasthan Police for questioning. The examination was conducted across 551 Indian cities and 14 international centres, with nearly 23 lakh candidates appearing. For lakhs of students, however, the cancellation has been devastating, with many describing years of preparation and expensive coaching classes thrown into uncertainty. NTA head Abhishek Singh said that he take responsibility over the leak, while, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, meanwhile, refused to respond to questions from the media. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Pages 2, 4 & 5*

SFI activists being detained during a protest after NEET paper leak in New Delhi —*PTI*

Coaching centres responsible: Sharanprakash

Karnataka Medical Education Minister Sharanprakash Patil alleged that coaching centres in Rajasthan and Haryana are actively orchestrating question paper leaks to boost their own reputation and business. "Elements within the Central Government are complicit in this racket." he said, calling for strict regulatory action against centres indulging in such malpractices. He urged the Central Government to break up the nexus between coaching industries and examination authorities. Further, he said, "The Prime Minister must stop making grand speeches and instead provide immediate solutions to problems like these. The man who hosts 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' must first resolve the chaos in this very examination."



TN CM Joseph Vijay with AIDMK leaders CV Shanmugam (third from left) during a meeting in Chennai on Tuesday —*PTI*

AIADMK splits, 30 MLAs back TVK

CHENNAI, 12 MAY

The opposition AIADMK appeared headed for a split on Tuesday after a group of its MLAs revolted against party chief Edappadi K Palaniswami, accusing him of seeking an alliance with arch rival DMK, and announced support for the Vijay-led government ahead of the floor test on Wednesday.

About 30 MLAs, led by senior leaders SP Velumani and C Ve Shanmugam, are believed to be in the rebel camp that has questioned Palaniswami's leadership following the party's debacle in the 23 April assembly polls, where it won only 47 of the 164 seats it contested.

Speaking to reporters, Shanmugam said they would meet C Joseph Vijay to provide a letter supporting his government. He also alleged that party general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami wanted to form a government with the DMK's support.

> **Strict action will be taken against anyone who behaves in a manner that causes hindrance to the public through banners, celebrations, or anything else**
>
> —TVK warns cadres

Pointing out that the AIADMK was floated to oppose and "uproot" the DMK, Shanmugam said all party members opposed Palaniswami's proposal to form a government with the support of the MK Stalin-led party. He added that any such proposal contradicted the AIADMK's fundamental principles. The party needs a "new life now" and "Amma (Jayalalithaa) rule" should return. Therefore, he added, we must support TVK. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 3*

Census enumerators to carry QR ID cards amid cyber frauds

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Amid a rise in cyber fraud involving impersonation and fake government officials, authorities have introduced a QR code-based verification system for Census 2027 enumerators and supervisors visiting households in Delhi. This measure aims to make door-to-door enumeration from 16 May in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi more secure and effective. Officials from the Office of the Registrar General and Census explained that all enumerators and supervisors will carry an appointment letter and identity card with embedded QR codes residents can scan for verification. "If there is any doubt or suspicion, household members can verify the visiting personnel by checking their appointment letter and identity card. They can also scan the QR code printed on these documents to confirm authenticity," they said. The move responds to recent online "digital arrest" scams and fake census messages. Currently, 93,521 self-enumerations have been recorded, with most entries from North East, South West, and North West Delhi. If households cannot geo-tag precisely, they may tag a nearby location, with enumerators verifying via maps and self-enumeration IDs. —*PTI*

Rupee falls to record low of 95.75

MUMBAI, 12 MAY

The rupee depreciated 35 paise to close at an all-time low of 95.75 against the US dollar on Tuesday, as tension between the US and Iran led to risk aversion in global markets.

Forex traders said market sentiment remained dominated by fears that the 10-week-old conflict could further tighten global supply, particularly after President Trump rejected Tehran's latest response to a US-backed peace proposal, calling it totally unacceptable.

Moreover, market participants interpreted Prime Minister Modi's comments

over the weekend regarding fuel conservation and lower imports as a subtle acknowledgement that India's trade deficit and balance-of-payments pressures could worsen if crude prices remain elevated.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 95.57 and lost ground to touch an all-time intraday low of 95.75. The USD/INR pair eventually settled at a record closing low of 95.63 (provisional), down 35 paise from its previous close.

On Monday, the rupee tanked 79 paise to settle at its record low of 95.28 against the US dollar.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias after the US rejected Iran's response to the US' peace proposal. "The surge in crude oil prices and a strong dollar may drag down the rupee," said Anuj Choudhary, Research analyst. —*PTI*

We already knew: India on China helping Pak in Op Sindoor

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

India on Tuesday said reports of Chinese support to Pakistan during Operation Sindoor only confirmed "what was already known", and urged "responsible nations" to reflect on the consequences of backing efforts to shield terrorist infrastructure.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said Operation Sindoor was a "precise, targeted and calibrated" response to the Pahalgam terror attack and aimed at destroying state-sponsored terror infrastructure in Pakistan.

The remarks came days after China confirmed providing on-site technical support to Pakistan during the four-day conflict. Following the 7 May strikes on terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, tensions escalated briefly before both sides halted military action on 10 May after military-level talks. —*PTI*

ABOLISH SANATAN DHARMA: UDHAYANIDHI IN 1ST LOP SPEECH

CHENNAI, 12 MAY

DMK leader Udhayanidhi Stalin on Tuesday renewed his call for the "abolition" of Sanatan Dharma, claiming it divides people, while delivering his maiden speech as Leader of the Opposition in the Tamil Nadu Assembly.

"Sanatan Dharma, which divides the people, must certainly be abolished," he said, repeating remarks made in September 2023 that had triggered a major political row and multiple court cases filed by pro-Hindu organisations.

During his speech, Udhayanidhi also objected to the alleged sidelining of "Tamil Thai Vazhuthu", the Tamil invocation song, during the recent swearing-in ceremony of the new govern-

ment. He said the anthem had been moved to the third position in the order of events instead of receiving its traditional priority.

Calling it a mistake, he warned that the opposition "will not permit" such incidents to recur in the Assembly. Udhayanidhi further said the opposition benches now hold a strength nearly equal to that of the ruling party. Reacting to the remarks, RSS general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale compared Sanatan to a banyan tree and dismissed the DMK leader's comments. "Sanatan is the spirit and soul of this nation. It is not a religious practice, but a worldview," Hosabale said. —*PTI*

HIMANTA AT HELM

PM Narendra Modi congratulates newly sworn-in Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma during the ceremony in Guwahati on Tuesday —*PTI* >>>*MORE ON PGS 3 & 5*

4 CHEETAH CUBS BORN IN KUNO FOUND DEAD

SHEOPUR, 12 MAY

Four cheetah cubs, born a month ago, were found dead in the Kuno National Park located in Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday morning with the carcasses partially devoured, an official said. "Around 6.30am today, four cubs born to female cheetah KGP12 on 11 April 11 - were found dead with carcasses partially eaten, by the monitoring team near the den site in Sheopur territorial division," the official said. The cubs were last observed alive on the evening of 11 May, he said.

The death of these cubs appears to have been caused due to predation by another animal, the official said. The mother cheetah is safe and healthy. Further details will be known after post-mortem examination and detailed investigation, he said.

After the death of these four cubs, there are now 53 cheetahs left in India. While the Kuno National Park is home to 50 cheetahs, including 33 Indian-born ones, three cheetahs are at the Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary in the state, according to him.

All the surviving cheetahs are healthy and doing well, the official added.

Nine cheetahs -- six females and three males -- were brought to Kuno from Botswana in February this year. —*PTI*

K'taka bans trekking in forests after leopard kills boy

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

Karnataka government has suspended trekking expeditions and public movement in wildlife-sensitive forest areas across the State with immediate effect. This was following the death of a 10-year-old boy, who was dragged away and mauled by a leopard at the MM Hills Wildlife Sanctuary in Chamarajanagar district.

The restrictions apply across all wildlife divisions in Karnataka, including major ecotourism destinations such as Bandipur National Park, Nagarhole National Park, Biligiri Ranganatha Tiger Reserve, Bhadra Tiger Reserve and Kali Tiger Reserve.

The incident has raised serious concerns over the safety of trekkers, tourists and local residents, while also reigniting debate over increasing human movement inside forest zones and the resulting rise in human-wildlife conflict.

Following the incident, Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre convened an emergency meeting with senior officials and directed authorities to strengthen safety measures in forest regions. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests issued a temporary ban of trekking in forests. Officials said trekking routes would remain closed until all safety measures under existing SOPs are fully implemented. —*Salar News*

'CAN'T PAY FOR MEDICINES'

Not able to sell paddy, Odisha farmer seeks euthanasia

BHUBANESWAR, 12 MAY

Unable to sell his paddy at the state-run market yard, a farmer in Odisha's Bargarh district has sought permission from the government for euthanasia.

The distressed farmer, identified as Rohit Bhoi of Sahara Tikra village under Bheden block, on Monday submitted a petition to the Bargarh Collector Aditya Goyan when the officer came to hold a public grievance session.

"I want 'ichha mrutyu' (euthanasia) for being unable to sell my paddy even after waiting for six months for procurement. I am under distress and unable to afford medicine for my elderly parents and fund my children's education.

—MAGNIFIC

Therefore, it is better to die," farmer Bhoi wrote in the petition.

The farmer said that, though procurement for the new kharif season has already begun, his paddy from the previous season remains unsold. He has harvested around 220 packets of paddy, but the state-run 'mandi' is yet to procure them.

Bhoi pointed out that cultivation is the sole source of his family's income. "I have written several letters to the district authorities, but none paid any heed towards my plight," he told the district collector.

"Left with no option, I sought permission for euthanasia," the framer said.

Odisha Cooperation minister Pradeep Bal Samanta said, "The matter came to my knowledge just now. I will immediately ask the department and the concerned district collector to take up the matter and ensure that no injustice is done to the farmer."

"If there is a problem, there is a solution. We should discuss the matter instead of seeking euthanasia or taking any extreme step ," the minister told reporters. —*PTI*

5 held for selling banned hydro ganja in the City

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

Five individuals have been arrested and demanded for selling banned Hydro Ganja in the City, police announced on Tuesday. They seized 3 kg 686 grams of Hydro Ganja, valued at Rs 2.56 crore in the market. The arrests followed credible intelligence that the narcotic was being sold within Ashok Nagar and Malleshwaram police station limits in the City. Police registered cases under the NDPS Act at the respective stations. Raids at locations identified by informants led to the detention of the five suspects on different dates. All accused confessed to procuring Hydro Ganja at lower prices from unidentified suppliers and selling it to the public. Police recovered 3kg 686gm of Hydro Ganja, with the total seizure valued at Rs 1.28 crore. Efforts to trace the supplier are ongoing. *—PTI*

BSc student dies by suicide in Belagavi hostel on her b'day

BELAGAVI, 12 MAY

A BSc final-year student allegedly died by suicide on her birthday at the Post-Matric Girls' Hostel for Scheduled Tribes located in Azam Nagar if Belagavi. The 21-year-old deceased was from a village in Hukkeri taluk. She was found hanging dead to the ceiling in the hostel room. The exact reason behind the suicide is yet to be ascertained. According to family members, she, about 3 months ago, got engaged to a police constable. The grieving family is inconsolable following her demise. Staff from APMC Police Station visited the spot, conducted an inspection, and launched an investigation into the case. *—SALAR NEWS*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

—SCREENGRAB

Karwar fishing boat sinks off Goa coast, 22 rescued

UTTARA KANNADA, 12 MAY

A Persian-model fishing boat from Karwar sank off the Betul coast while returning from deep-sea fishing, narrowly avoiding a major tragedy. All 22 fishermen on board were rescued safely by nearby fishing crews. The boat, named Shree Amma, owned by Dinesh Kanchan of Mudga, had been at sea for about a week. Reports state the vessel developed a technical fault near Betul and began to sink. Crews of nearby boats responded promptly, launching a rescue operation that saved all 22 fishermen. The incident resulted in significant financial losses, with the boat, fishing nets, and equipment valued in crores of rupees lost at sea. *—SALAR NEWS*

Union Edu Minister must resign: CM on NEET leak

Netas say States should hold entrance exams after many lapses

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

The Congress unit in the State launched a scathing attack on the Centre over the cancellation of the NEET UG exams due to a paper leak. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Medical Education Minister Sharanprakash Patil even demanded that Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigned immediately.

In a statement, Siddaramaiah called the cancellation a "cruel betrayal", noting that the exams were cancelled after more than 22 lakh students, including over 1 lakh students from Karnataka, wrote it. "In one stroke, the Union Government has pushed them back into uncertainty and distress," he alleged.

"In 2024 itself, our government had placed Karnataka's concerns on record: NEET is unfair to rural and poor students, weakens school education, and takes away the States' rightful authority over admissions," Siddaramaiah added. "Today's cancellation proves that our concerns were real."

He alleged that instead of taking responsibility, Pradhan evaded questions, "proving once again that the Modi government does not care a whit about the country's youth".

Meanwhile, Patil told media that "the BJP government at the Centre is entirely responsible for the mess".

"This is a testament to the incompetence of the BJP-led government at the Centre. Where there is question paper leakage, crores of rupees are changing hands — this is nothing but corruption," Patil added.

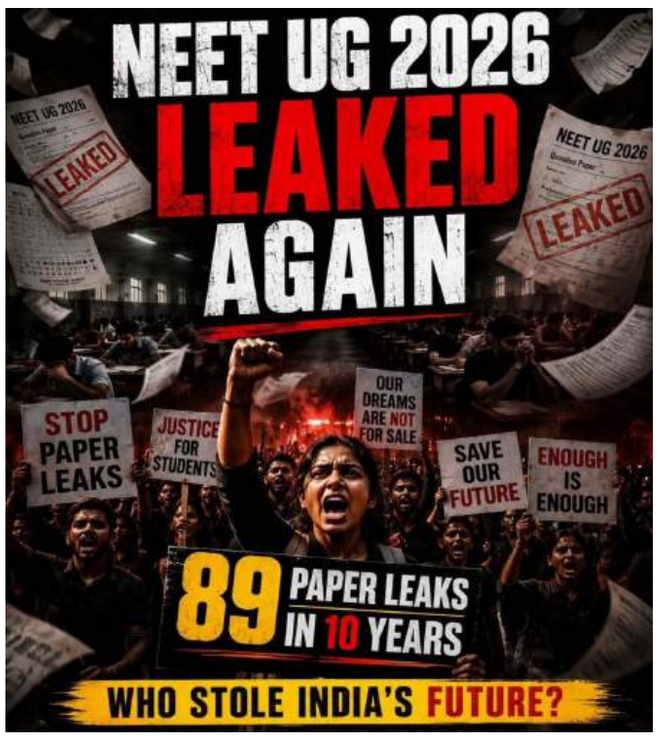
He urged students not to lose hope, even has he said conducting exams again was unfair to them. He further noted that Karnataka's own Common Entrance Test (CET) has been conducted without a single such lapse, claiming that the Modi government has no idea how to conduct exams.

State Higher Education Minister MC Sudhakar alleged that these incidents are being repeated. "The Central Government and the Supreme Court must take note of it. There is opposition to NEET in many states. Perhaps those states should be allowed to conduct their own examinations."

"Cancel NEET and conduct exams at the State level, using state PUC or equivalent 12th-grade marks on a 50-50 basis. We in Karnataka conduct CET through the Karnataka Examinations Authority. If such examinations are conducted, the problems can be avoided," he said.

However, Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy hit out at critics.

"How many times have you postponed exams in our own State? During your (Congress) tenure, how many such incidents have happened? Even today, you are not able to fix a single institution like the KPSC," he said. *—Salar News*



Chief Minister Siddaramaiah posted an image on X alleging that there had been 89 paper leaks in 10 years under the BJP government *X@SIDDARAMAIAH*

HDK approves EV charging infra worth Rs 1,232cr for K'taka

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy during a conference on EV charging infrastructure, in Bengaluru, on Tuesday *—X@HD_KUMARASWAMY*

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy on Tuesday announced approval of proposals pertaining to electric vehicle charging infrastructure totalling Rs 50,386 crore across various states, including Rs 1,232.6 crore for Karnataka.

"I am happy to announce approval of proposals for Karnataka involving 1,243 EV chargers with an outlay of Rs 1,232.6 crore, further strengthening Bengaluru's position as a leading EV charging hub," the Minister of Heavy Industries said after inaugurating a Conference on Enabling Nationwide EV Charging Infrastructure under the PM E-DRIVE Scheme in Bengaluru.

"So far, EV charging proposals with a total financial outlay of Rs 50,386 crore have been approved, covering installation of 4,874 EV chargers across various states and CPSUs," he added.

Kumaraswamy said the amount released in the first phase is Rs 2,000 crore.

"In the second phase, whatever development proposals your state has shown today regarding EV vehicles and charging stations, I assure you from my department that we will support you fully and with confidence," Kumaraswamy added.

The approved proposals include major CPSUs such as HPCL, IOCL, and BPCL, as well as states including Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Kerala, Telangana, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu.

He said the Production Linked Incentive for Advanced Chemistry Cell Battery Storage scheme, with an outlay of Rs 18,100 crore, encourages domestic battery manufacturing. The PLI Auto scheme, with Rs 25,938 crore, promotes cleaner vehicles including EVs and hydrogen models.

He said the RE PM scheme, with Rs 7,280 crore, will boost rare earth magnet manufacturing.

Kumaraswamy also highlighted the PM E-Drive scheme, with an outlay of about Rs 10,800–10,900 crore, including Rs 2,000 crore for EV charging infrastructure. Under FAME, 8,932 chargers have been installed nationwide, including 721 in Karnataka. *—PTI*

BJP posts fake article of Indira saying don't buy gold

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

The State BJP alleged that the Congress was unnecessarily attacking Prime Minister Narendra Modi after he called for austerity measures amid the West Asia war, and posted a fake news article purporting to show former prime minister Indira Gandhi telling people not to buy gold.

However, The Hindu news clipping, which the BJP claimed was from 1967, was fact check and debunked. The image resembled an archival newspaper front page from The Hindu and included references to economic measures, with Gandhi allegedly calling upon people to be "noble".

A PTI factcheck noticed a discrepancy in the newspaper's tagline. The circulated clipping carried the phrase "Indian National Newspaper", whereas The Hindu's official tagline has consistently been "India's National Newspaper" since 1878.

The Hindu even issued a news clarification, stating that "this is not an authentic page from our archives".

Modi had appealed to people not to buy gold and work from home, citing supply chain disruptions from the US-Israel war on Iran.

Yet, Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council N Chaluvadi Narayanaswamy posted on X that the Congress was playing "drama" by criticising Modi's appeal. He also posted a video of former union finance minister P Chidambaram urging people not to buy gold. *—Salar News*

SAREES RAM CHANDER PURE SILKS KANCHIPURAM
THE HINDU
Indian National Newspaper
FOR PERFECT PRINTING THE HINDU GROUP PRESS
Vol. 44 No. 286
MADRAS: TUESDAY, JUNE 6, 1967
Price 15 N.P.
Don't buy gold, Indira tells people; appeals for 'national discipline'
Foreign exchange position still critical: Govt.
Special Correspondent
NEW DELHI, June 5.—Mrs. Indira Gandhi today made an earnest appeal to the people not to buy gold in any form and to observe "national discipline" in the matter of gold consumption in the country.
Gold imports to be curbed further
FAKE

Girl killed, 2 injured as wall collapses in Yadgir

YADGIR, 12 MAY

An eight-year-old girl died and two others were seriously injured after a wall collapsed due to heavy rains lashing the region on Monday in Tumkur village of Vadagera taluk in Yadgir district.

The deceased, Akshata, was reportedly playing with other children in the courtyard of her house when the kitchen wall of her house suddenly collapsed.

Akshata was trapped under the debris and died on the spot. Two other children sustained serious injuries in the incident and were immediately shifted to the Yadgir Institute of Medical Sciences (YIMS) hospital for treatment. Their condition is said to be critical.

A case has been registered at the Vadagera Police Station, and an investigation is underway. *—Salar News*

TEACHERS DEMAND SALARY

The Karnataka State Government Primary School Teachers' Association demand that the State government implements a High Court order and releases a pending minimum wage difference of Rs. 64,236. They also called for their salaries to be increased from Rs 17,000 to Rs 27,000, at Freedom Park in Bengaluru, on Tuesday *—SALAR*

ELECTRIC BUGGIES TO FERRY PASSENGERS AT MAJESTIC RAILWAY STATION

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

Ride hailing platform Rapido has launched an electric buggy service at KSR Bengaluru City Railway Station (Majestic), aiming to help passengers move easily around the station.

Passengers will be charged a flat Rs 12 fee under the pilot initiative. Passengers will be transported directly from the platform to Rapido's organised pickup point, where autos and cabs are available for immediate boarding.

Reports indicate that the programme aims at reducing overcrowding in one of the City's main transport hubs.

If the pilot programme proves to be successful, Rapido has indicated that it will expand the initiative to other stations. *—Agencies*

HM to let NIA probe gelatin sticks during PM visit

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

Home Minister G Parameshwara said the State government was ready to hand over the probe into the discovery of gelatin sticks that triggered a security scare along Prime Minister Narendra Modi's convoy route in Bengaluru to the NIA.

He said the State police did a "good job" by finding the gelatin sticks well ahead of the PM's visit on Sunday. On Tuesday, police also found a circuit and a timer.

The "explosive materials" were found in a cardboard box, sources said adding that there was a timer and a circuit. Police think that those who tried to put it there could not assemble it.

"One person (from Koramangala) has been arrested in connection with a phone call claiming a bomb had been planted near the Art of Living Foundation and he is being interrogated. Police have secured gelatin sticks from a roadside to the venue and it will be investigated," Parameshwara told reporters. "If they (NIA) ask, we will give; let them investigate."

Asked whether there was any terror connection to the incident, he said, "I don't know. Nothing can be said until investigation is done."

A suspicious packet containing two gelatin sticks was found on the outskirts of the City, where Modi's convoy was scheduled to pass, triggering a temporary security scare. Police said that a caller told them that he placed a bomb. *—PTI*

> **When the Prime Minister travels anywhere in the world, proper security is provided. In such a situation, how can it be acceptable that the security arrangements were not in order when he came to the state**
>
> -B Sriramulu, BJP leader and former minister

WITH NOVEL AUCTION

Kolar school runs on funds from mango sales

SRINIVASAPURA, 12 MAY

A government lower primary school at Avalakuppa village in Srinivasapura taluk, Kolar district, has continued a unique tradition of supporting students through income generated from its mango grove.

The school, which has classes up to the fifth standard, earned Rs 1.55 lakh this year through the auction of mango crops grown on its 10-acre orchard.

According to Headmaster Shankar, the land along with mango saplings was donated to the school in 1965 by Chikkasiddappa, a resident of the village. The donor had specified that the income from the mango harvest should be utilised exclusively for the welfare of school children.

As stipulated in the gift deed, the mango crop is auctioned annually in an open and transparent manner in the presence of education department officials, village elders and local residents. One-third of the auction amount is credited to the school fund, while the remaining share is paid to Mulavagilappa towards upkeep of the orchard and safeguarding the crop.

Mangoes being auctioned at the government lower primary school premises on Monday *Salar*

This year's auction, conducted on Monday, witnessed participation from 11 bidders. Nayaz, a fruit trader from Srinivasapura, secured the rights over the crop with the highest bid of Rs. 1.55 lakh.

- The land for the mango orchard was donated to the school in 1965 by Chikkasiddappa, a resident, who specified that the income from the mango harvest should be utilised exclusively for the welfare of school children

The school authorities utilise the proceeds to provide uniforms, shoes and other essentials to students besides organising educational excursions.

However, the headmaster noted that this year's mango yield was significantly affected by the intense summer heat prevailing across the district, leading to a sharp decline in revenue compared to last year, when the crop had fetched over Rs 5.20 lakh. – *Salar News*

Three arrested for selling deer antlers in City

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

Three people have been arrested for allegedly selling deer antlers, which is illegal, police said in Bengaluru on Tuesday. Officials seized one deer antler from the accused, valued at around Rs 10 lakh.

On 9 May, an officer of the Organised Crime Wing (East) of the CCB received credible information that some unidentified persons had come near a college in Chikkabanavara to sell the antlers of a wild animal, police said in a release.

After verifying the information, CCB officers registered a case at Chikkabanavara Police Station under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (2022 Amendment). They said, subsequently, CCB Organised Crime Wing (East), along with staff from Chikkabanavara Police Station, conducted a raid at the location and apprehend the three.

During interrogation, the accused confessed that they had committed the offence.

One of the accused was sentenced by a court to seven days of police custody, and the remaining two accused were remanded to judicial custody, police said. *—PTI*

- The three acused were aprehended after a raid, and confessed to selling illegal deer antlers. One deer antler was seized, valued at around Rs 10 lakh.

Grant 56% reservation for SC, ST, OBCs: Tribal body urges CM

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

A tribal body has urged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to press the Centre and State to ensure inclusion of the 56 per cent reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution.

In a letter, the Karnataka Rajya Valmiki Samajada Samana Manaskara Vedike also sought steps to vacate the High Court stay on the law.

"This appears to be merely a symbolic exercise," it said, referring to a 20 January communication seeking guidance. The organisation also accused the Centre of "delaying the inclusion" of the law.

It alleged that inadequate pressure had been exerted despite a unanimous resolution passed in December 2025.

The body requested Siddaramaiah to convene an all-party meeting, take steps to vacate the stay, and lead a delegation to meet the PM. *—PTI*

Kerala CM suspense likely to end today

Rahul Gandhi holding talks with former Kerala PCC chiefs and working presidents

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

The Kerala chief minister nominee will be announced either tonight or Wednesday morning, former state Congress chief K Muraleedharan said on Tuesday after meeting Rahul Gandhi who held one-on-one talks with party leaders in a bid to end the uncertainty on the matter.

Rahul met several Congress leaders from Kerala, including ex-state unit chiefs, working presidents and other key leaders, at Sonia Gandhi's #10, Janpath residence.

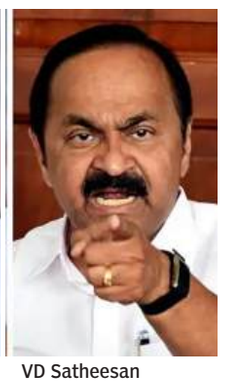
"Kharge is coming back from Bengaluru in the evening. So after he is back, one more discussion will take place and they will talk to Sonia Gandhi also. Then, the decision will come tonight or tomorrow morning," former Kerala PCC chief Muraleedharan told reporters.

The three main contenders for the CM post are Ramesh Chennithala, VD Satheesan and AICC general secretary (Organisation) KC Venugopal.

— ANI

KC Venugopal

Ramesh Chennithala


VD Satheesan

Among those who met Rahul were former KPCC chiefs MM Hassan, K Sudhakaran and Muraleedharan, Kerala Congress Disciplinary Committee head Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan as well as working presidents Shafi Parambil, AP Anil Kumar and PC Vishunath.

Another former Kerala PCC chief, VM Sudheeran, is scheduled to meet Rahul in the afternoon. His colleague Mullapally Ramachandran will speak to Rahul over phone as he is unable to travel.

A decision on the next Kerala chief minister has been pending since 4 May when the Congress-led UDF bagged 102 seats out of the 140, which is more than a two-thirds majority.

The Congress has 63 MLAs in the 140-member Kerala Assembly. Its allies Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) has 22, Kerala Congress (KEC) has eight and the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) three. —*PTI*

HC barred TVK MLA due to Tiruppattur vote mix-up: DMK

CHENNAI, 12 MAY

The DMK announced that due to a potential postal vote mix-up between Tiruppattur in Sivaganga district and Tiruppattur near Vellore, the Madras High Court has barred a TVK MLA from voting during the assembly floor test. The court's order follows a close election where TVK's Seenivasa Sethupathi R secured 83,373 votes, and DMK's KR Periyakaruppan received 83,374 votes. Annadurai said, "If the single disputed vote is counted in the DMK's favour, the tally would become equal, requiring a coin toss." Annadurai also clarified DMK's stance on Sanatana Dharma and NEET, criticising leak reports and government handling. —*PTI*

— PTI

MP Lodhi booked for remarks against Modi

LUCKNOW, 12 MAY

Samajwadi Party MP Ajendra Singh Lodhi has been booked in Mahoba under charges of assault on a public official and promoting hate after calling Prime Minister Narendra Modi "anti-national". Lodhi, representing Hamirpur, was booked Monday night under sections 132, 189(2), 196(1), and 352 of the BNS, following a complaint by BJP district media in-charge Gupta. Gupta claimed Lodhi made vulgar remarks about Modi, creating caste hatred. A video shows Lodhi criticising Modi's austerity appeal, calling him "desh-virodhi". UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath condemned Lodhi's remarks, calling them a serious blow to democratic decorum and reflecting "bad political culture". —*PTI*

Society tolerating gangrape now, says Bihar DGP

CHANDIGARH, 12 MAY

Bihar DGP Vinay Kumar expressed concern over the increasing gang-rape cases, stating they have become more common over the past two decades, leading to greater societal tolerance. Speaking at a workshop on gender-based violence, he said, "Two decades ago, gang-rapes were rare and attracted public uproar, but nowadays the frequency has increased, leading to growing tolerance." He claimed only 2 per cent of sexual harassment cases are reported. Kumar called for stricter law enforcement, warned police against insensitivity, and criticised allegations of police extortion. He said that over 30 per cent of Bihar Police are women, but social attitudes hinder progress. —*PTI*

— PTI

Parth, Jay Pawar inducted into NCP leadership

MUMBAI, 12 MAY

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar has appointed her sons Parth and Jay Pawar to the NCP's working committee. Parth, recently elected to the Rajya Sabha, is the general secretary, while Jay is the secretary and head of the disciplinary committee. The party's list, sent to the Election Commission, includes 22 members, with prominent figures like Praful Patel, Sunil Tatkare, and Chhagan Bhujbal. Sunetra became deputy CM after her husband Ajit Pawar's death in January. Jay Pawar is also treasurer, and the committee has leaders like Dhiraj Sharma and MLAs from Arunachal. —*PTI*

Vijay closes 717 liquor shops in TN

CHENNAI, 12 MAY

Amid demands from women and some political parties for implementing prohibition, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay on Tuesday ordered the closure of 717 state-run retail liquor outlets, including 276 shops near places of worship across the state.

The move was done keeping in mind public welfare and Vijay issued orders to shut down the retail liquor outlets, an official release said.

The opposition DMK mocked the move as "mere PR."

Liquor sales is one of government's key revenue generators in Tamil Nadu.

There has been demand, especially from women and some political parties like the PMK, that all the liquor shops in the state should be closed.

Responding, DMK spokesperson Saravanan Annadurai claimed TASMAC outlets were not present near places of worship and educational institutions. "Will they open new shops and close them down. This is mere PR (public relations)," he said on social media platform 'X.'

Liquor sales is one of the government's main revenue generators in Tamil Nadu—*ANI*

The Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC) operates 4,765 retail liquor outlets across the state. In 2025, the revenue from liquor sales in Tamil Nadu was Rs 48,344 crore. TASMAC sells 551 brands of liquor imported from foreign countries, including 223 brands of wine.

Chief Minister Vijay urged the Centre to utilise diplomatic channels and secure the release of all Tamil Nadu fishermen and their fishing boats detained by Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, AMMK founder TTV Dhinakaran on Tuesday "removed" his party's lone MLA from the organisation as he had declared "unilateral" support for the ruling TVK.

Dhinakaran's action came within hours after his party MLA S Kamaraj extended support to the Chief Minister Vijay-led government in the Assembly. The act was "unilateral," and against party discipline, Dhinakaran said. .

The development comes days after Dhinakaran levelled "horse-trading" charges against TVK involving his MLA's support to it, which the TVK dismissed. — *PTI*

Vijay appoints astrologer as OSD, draws flak

CHENNAI, 12 MAY

Chief Minister Vijay, a day after the row over Tamil anthem, got into a fresh row on Tuesday after appointing his astrologer Radhan Pandit Vettrivel as his Officer on Special Duty or OSD.

The astrologer is the one who had predicted that Vijay would have a landslide victory. The move has raised eyebrows in several quarters, including among his ally Congress. Pandit, known for his dual role as an astrologer and as a TVK spokesperson, has been a close aide to the leadership during the campaign.

During the counting of votes on 4 May when TVK had unexpectedly pulled ahead, Radhan Pandit was the first person who visited Vijay's residence.

The emotional connect may not be explanation enough for allies or the opposition DMK, who are used to taking a tough stand against any kind of superstition. In a post on X, Congress MP Sasikanth Senthil said, "Beats me. Why would an astrologer require an OSD post? Can anyone explain."

"This is unacceptable in a secular government. The CM should reconsider this," read a post on X from VCK general secretary D Ravikumar.

Another post from the X handle of the VCK General Secretary read: "The Tamil Nadu government should immediately withdraw this appointment"

Appointing such a person as an officer at government expense will only serve to increase faith in astrology. This is unacceptable," said a post from CPM's Central Committee member Shanmugam P. — *PTI*

TVK's Prabhakar unanimously elected TN Speaker

TVK legislator JCD Prabhakar was unanimously elected as Tamil Nadu Assembly Speaker on Tuesday. Shortly after his election, Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay said the Assembly has the responsibility to transform the expectations of the people into laws. In his speech Vijay said, "Here everyone is equal. The views expressed by the opposition and also the TVK will be accorded equal importance. This Assembly should function as the heart and brain of democracy." —*PTI*

SC to hear TVK MLA's plea against Madras HC order

The SC has agreed to hear the plea of a TVK MLA challenging the Madras HC's order restraining him from participating in the floor test in the Tamil Nadu Assembly. TVK leader C Joseph Vijay took oath as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu on 10 May. The plea of TVK MLA R Seenivasa Sethupathi was mentioned for urgent hearing on Monday before CJI Surya Kant by senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi. The bench agreed to list the case for hearing on Wednesday. —*PTI*

Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma and West Bengal CM Suvendu Adhikari during the swearing-in of the Assam government —*PTI*

Himanta takes oath as Assam CM, 4 MLAs sworn in

GUWAHATI, 12 MAY

Himanta Biswa Sarma was sworn in as the chief minister of Assam for the second consecutive term on Tuesday, marking the formation of the third consecutive BJP-led NDA government in the state.

Four MLAs, BJP's Rameshwar Teli and Ajanta Neog, AGP's Atul Bora, Charan Boro of the BPF, also took oath as ministers.

Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya administered the oath of office to Sarma and the four legislators at a grand ceremony held at the Veterinary Ground in Khanapara area in Guwahati.

Prime Minister Modi, Union ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari, Sarbananda Sonowal, Pabitra Margherita, chief ministers and deputy CMs of BJP-ruled states and BJP president Nitin Nabin were present at the swearing-in ceremony.

The chief minister, attired in dhoti and kurta with the traditional 'gamosa' draped around his neck, took oath in Assamese.

Three of the four legislators, Teli, Bora and Neog, also took their oath in Assamese, while the BPF minister took it in the Bodo language.

> **Himanta Biswa Sarma's hard work for Assam's development and the blessings of the Almighty and the people led him to victory. He will continue to work for the state and its people**
> -Sarma's family

The Prime Minister congratulated Sarma and the ministers after they were sworn in.

After the oath-taking ceremony was over, the PM greeted the people and those present on the dais.

"With the blessings of Maa Kamakhya, Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev and the people of Assam, I took oath as the chief minister. Along with the council of ministers, we look forward to serving our people," Sarma said in a post on X.

The NDA won a record 102 seats of the 126-member assembly, including the BJP's 82 constituencies.

The BJP allies, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and the Bodoland Peoples' Front (BPF), bagged 10 seats each.

US to strengthen ties with Assam

GUWAHATI, 12 MAY

US Ambassador Sergio Gor said on Tuesday that his country will explore more opportunities with Assam that will be commercially beneficial to both sides.

Gor was in Guwahati to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who created history by becoming the only non-Congress and the first BJP CM to assume power for two successive terms in the state.

"Honoured to have been invited to Guwahati today to attend the swearing-in ceremony of the CM Himanta Biswa Sarma," Gor said in a post on social media.

"The US and Assam have many commercial ties, and we will identify more win-win scenarios for both of us!" he added. — PTI

CBI takes over probe into Rath's murder

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

The CBI has registered an FIR in the murder case of West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari's aide Chandranath Rath, after taking over the investigation from the WB police, officials said.

The CBI's move came after a request from the state government, they said.

The CBI has set up a seven-member special investigation team under a DIG of Special Crime from Delhi, comprising some of the best investigators. .

According to the officials, the CBI team has already reached the crime scene and have started the investigation.

The CBI re-registers state police FIRs as its own case, which becomes the starting point of the probe.

The investigation is conducted independently, and the outcome may or may not support the allegations.

The CBI then files a final report before a court, which can be a chargesheet or a closure depending on the findings of the agency.

Meanwhile. the West Bengal Police on Monday arrested three people from UP and Bihar in connection with Rath's killing, pursuing leads from a UPI transaction made at a toll plaza by one of the suspects.

CBI PROBE WELCOMED

Meanwhile, the counsel of the man arrested in the murder Rath has welcomed the CBI probe. Advocate Harivansh accused the WB Police of failing to adhere to legal procedures during the arrest of his client, Raj Singh.

He said Raj's arrest was recorded in Ayodhya, and the WB police should have obtained a transit remand from the CJM's court to take him to West Bengal. Instead, the WB Police took him directly to Kolkata, he said. — *PTI*

AMID PM'S AUSTERITY CALL

MP Opposition flags BJP leaders' huge convoys

BHOPAL, 12 MAY

The opposition Congress in Madhya Pradesh has slammed the BJP after BJP leaders appointed to head state corporations, arrived in large convoys despite Prime Minister Modi's appeal to reduce fuel consumption.

The state government recently made political appointments to corporations and boards.

Saubhagya Singh Thakur, appointed as chairman of the Madhya Pradesh Textbook Corporation, arrived in Bhopal from Ujjain on Monday with his supporters to take charge. Videos of his convoy, consisting of several vehicles, went viral.

Thakur later visited Chief Minister Mohan Yadav's residence to thank him for the appointment.

Similarly, Rakesh Singh Jadon, appointed as Vice President of the Khadi Village Industries Board, also arrived with a large convoy from Vidisha.

State BJP secretary Rajneesh Agarwal said, "Everyone is trying to follow the PM's appeal. If there have been any shortcomings, they are being rectified. All BJP leaders have been told to follow the PM's instructions."

Meanwhile, NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar said on Tuesday that Prime Minister Modi's appeal for austerity is likely to have a far-reaching impact on the economy and urged him to convene an all-party meeting to discuss the situation.

Pawar said the Prime Minister's sudden appeal had created unease among ordinary citizens, businesses and investors.

MNS president Raj Thackeray asked on Tuesday whether austerity is meant only for commoners and flagged the fuel consumption during the recent election campaigns where thousands of cars were used for roadshows. — *PTI*

Union Minister of State Ramdas Athawale takes a metro ride from Vidhan Bhavan to Dharavi on Mumbai Metro Line-3 on Tuesday—*PTI*

'Modi's call is swadeshi drive'

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

The RSS-affiliated Swadeshi Jagran Manch said on Tuesday that PM Modi's austerity push is nothing but a call for 'Swadesh which will help cut India's dependence on foreign nations.

The SJM's remarks came after Modi called for the judicious use of fuel postponement of gold purchases and visits abroad, to strengthen the Indian economy, while emphasising that the Centre is trying to shield people from the adverse impact of the continuing West Asia conflict. — *PTI*

— PTI

NE woman beaten up in Delhi, M'laya CM seeks action

SHILLONG, 12 MAY

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma has expressed concern over the alleged assault of a woman from the Northeast in Delhi and called for strict legal action against the accused. He condemned the physical and racial harassment faced by the woman from Assam. "Such repeated acts of violence and discrimination cannot be dismissed as isolated incidents and must be met with the strictest punishment under the law," Sangma said on X. The incident involved two women, one from Assam and the other from Bihar, allegedly molested outside a hotel in Delhi's Nehru Place. All four suspects have been detained. Sangma urged authorities to take immediate action, emphasising that racial discrimination and violence against Northeast residents have no place in society. —*PTI*

Noida pizza shop owner spits in dough; held

NOIDA, 12 MAY

A pizza shop owner in Noida has been arrested after a purported video circulated online showed him allegedly spitting on pizza dough while preparing food, police said on Tuesday. The video shared on social media has triggered outrage among local residents. According to police, the incident took place at a pizza shop in Sector 22 under the Sector 24 police station area. Police here said they received information on Sunday regarding the video in which the shop owner is allegedly seen engaging in inappropriate conduct while making a pizza. The accused was identified as Muzammil, 30, from in Noida, police said. Following objections raised by local residents, the police arrested the accused and investigation is underway. —*PTI*

1,700kg narcotics worth Rs 72 cr destroyed in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Overseeing the destruction of about 1,700 kilograms of seized narcotics in Delhi, LG Taranjit Singh Sandhu described it as "the victory of law over criminality and hope over addiction." The substances, valued at nearly Rs 72 crore internationally, were destroyed on Tuesday. Sandhu announced the approval of Delhi's first dedicated Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) police station, aiming to make Delhi drug-free by 2027. "This event symbolises dismantling an ecosystem that threatens youth and harms society," he said. The LG emphasised that the 'Drug-Free India' mission is a national social responsibility. Delhi Police focus on dismantling traffickers' financial networks through enforcement, investigations, and preventive campaigns like 'Nasha Not Cool'. —*PTI*

Oppn slams govt over NEET-UG cancellation

They seek overhauling of National Testing Agency

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

SFI activists being detained during a protest demanding cancellation of NEET-UG 2026 in the wake of the alleged paper leak and admission scam, in New Delhi, Tuesday —*PTI*

Opposition leaders on Tuesday attacked the government after the cancellation of the NEET-UG examination, alleging administrative failure and insensitivity toward students, slamming the "repeated lapses" in the conduct of national-level competitive examinations.

Several opposition leaders took to X questioning the functioning of the National Testing Agency (NTA) and demanding accountability over the recurring controversies surrounding entrance tests.

The NTA on Tuesday cancelled the NEET (UG) 2026 exam held on 3 May amid allegations of paper leak, with the government asking the CBI to carry out a comprehensive inquiry into the "irregularities".

The examination for students seeking admission to undergraduate courses in medical colleges will now be held afresh.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi targetted the government over the cancellation, saying Prime Minister Narendra Modi's so-called 'amrit kaal' has turned into a 'vish kaal' (poison-filled era) for the country.

He said the hard work, sacrifices, and dreams of more than 22 lakh students have been "crushed by this corrupt BJP regime".

In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi said, "... Some fathers took loans, some mothers sold their jewellery, lakhs of children stayed up all night studying, and in return, they got paper leaks, government negligence, and organised corruption in education."

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal said, "I want to tell the students that they will have to come out on the streets. This government understands only the language of mass agitation ... Kejriwal is with you."

Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha member Sagarika Ghose said the cancellation had thrown the lives of lakhs of students into "disarray and anxiety".

RJD Rajya Sabha MP Manoj Jha posted on X, "Do anything but first dismantle NTA, NEET." CPI(M) Rajya Sabha MP John Brittas said repeated failures in national examinations were eroding public trust in the system. —*PTI*

> **The hard work, sacrifices, and dreams of 22L students have been crushed by corrupt BJP regime. Some fathers took loans, some mothers sold their jewellery, lakhs of children stayed up all night, and in return, they got paper leaks. The PM's so-called amrit kaal has turned into a 'vish kaal (poison-filled era)'** - Rahul Gandhi, Cong MP

Police stand guard outside the Bhojshala Temple in Dhar —*ANI*

ASI report on Bhojshala 'biased': Muslim side to HC

INDORE, 12 MAY

The Muslim side in the Bhojshala temple-Kamal Maula mosque complex case claimed before the Madhya Pradesh HC that the Archaeological Survey of India's (ASI) survey report was "biased" and was prepared to support the Hindu petitioners' claims even as the court reseved its order in the matter.

Senior lawyer Salman Khurshid and advocate Tausif Warsi, representing the Maulana Kamaluddin Welfare Society, presented their objections before Justices Vijay Kumar Shukla and Alok Awasthi of the HC's Indore bench on Monday.

Hindus consider Bhojshala as a temple dedicated to Goddess Saraswati, while the Muslim side calls it Kamal Maula Mosque. The disputed complex is protected by the ASI.

Maulana Kamaluddin Welfare Society of Dhar stated that the ASI used the term "Bhojshala Temple" throughout its survey report, even though there is no historical evidence to prove that the complex was a "Bhojshala Temple."

Such terminology reflects the ASI's "bias," it charged.

The ASI ignored historical texts and the survey report has no legal basis, the Muslim side claimed.

The Maulana Kamaluddin Welfare Society said ASI did not provide it the full video and colour photographs of the survey.

The Hindu Front for Justice claimed Bhojshala was a Saraswati temple established in 1034 by King Bhoj of the Parmar dynasty, and it was demolished in 1305 during Alauddin Khilji's invasion of Malwa. — *PTI*

HC overturns OCI denial to The Wire head

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday set aside the Centre's decision rejecting The Wire founding editor Siddharth Varadarajan's plea seeking conversion of his Person of Indian Origin (PIO) status to Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) and said the refusal was without reason.

Siddharth Varadarajan —*WIKIPEDIA*

Justice Purushaindra Kumar Kaurav restored the American journalist's application and asked authorities to take a fresh decision on it in accordance with law and pass a reasoned order.

"Unless the respondent assigns the reasons, the appellate court may not be able to appreciate (the matter). The reasons and heart and soul of the order... The impugned communication is set aside...," the court ordered.

The central government counsel urged the court to grant her time to take instructions, but the court asserted that the refusal could not be sustained.

"You will have to reconsider this. This order can't be sustained. Pass some reasoned order," the court orally remarked.

It clarified that the petitioner can take an appropriate legal remedy in case of any subsequent grievance.

The court listed for hearing on Wednesday Varadarajan's plea to let him travel and asked the central government counsel to take instructions as this aspect. —*PTI*

TIGER FOUND DEAD IN MP'S BANDHAVGARH

UMARIA, 12 MAY

A tiger has been found dead in the Bandhavgarh Reserve in Madhya Pradesh's Umaria district, with the authorities suspecting it was killed in a territorial fight, officials said on Tuesday.

Security personnel at Dhamdhama Camp in the Khitauli range of the reservere ported hearing sounds of tigers fighting around 6.30 am on Monday, field director Dr Anupam Sahay said.

This is the 26th incident of reported death of tiger in 2026 in MP. A patrol team later searched the area and found the carcass.

A preliminary examination indicated the tiger died in a clash between big cats. The carcass bore attack marks, but all organs were intact, the official said.

The tiger, nicknamed Pujari, was around eight years old and reportedly fearful of another big cat known as B1, often fleeing upon sighting it, he said.

The area has been cordoned off, and elephant patrols, a dog squad, and a metal detector team have been deployed for further investigation.

All action is being taken in line with guidelines and SOPs of National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), officials said. MP has several tiger reserves, including Bandhavgarh, Panna, Kanha and Satpura. As per the 2022 census, MP had 785 tigers, the highest in the country. —*PTI*

The tiger, nicknamed Pujari, was around eight years old and reportedly fearful of another big cat known as B1 —*ANI*

Kota C-section deaths: Strict norms ordered in OTs, ICUs

KOTA, 12 MAY

In the wake of the death of four women due to infection after C-section delivery, Rajasthan principal secretary (health) Gayatri Rathore has ordered strict adherence to treatment protocols in emergency operation theatres, ICUs and other critical units in hospitals.

Rathore on Monday night visited the ICU of the Super Speciality Block at New Medical College Hospital here and spoke to the relatives of three postpartum women, Pinki, Dhanni Bai, and Aarti, about their health.

She also spoke to Ragini Meena, who is admitted to the ICU, and said the condition has improved considerably.

Four women, two each at NMCH and JK Lone Hospital, died after developing complications following a caesarean d elivery.

Meanwhile, Rathore said the patients' treatment is being monitored by senior nephrologist Dr Dhananjay Agrawal, according to a statement.

She was briefed by Dr Vikas Khandelia on the treatment of all postpartum women who got the infection.

According to a statement, she also met Chandrakala and Sushila, who have been shifted to the nephrology ward, and enquired about their health. Their relatives said that both women are now in a much better condition. —*PTI*

SC likens Kapur family estate dispute to Mahabharat episode

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Eighty-year-old Rani Kapur has moved the Supreme Court with a fresh plea seeking to restrain Priya Sachdev Kapur and certain other respondents from interfering with the functioning of the "RK Family Trust" during the pendency of the mediation proceedings initiated by the Court on 7 May.

She has also sought a stay on the board meeting scheduled for May 18 pursuant to the notice and agenda dated 8 May issued by Raghuvanshi

Investment Private Limited (RIPL), which allegedly holds a major portion of the disputed family estate.

The plea was mentioned before a bench led by Justice JB Pardiwala today. Counsel appearing for Rani Kapur submitted that the proposed meeting is intended to appoint additional directors to the board.

"We have entered into an arena. The Mahabharat will look very small. We will look into it," the Judge remarked, while listing the matter for hearing on 14 May.

Kapur alleged the Board Meeting has been convened at the behest of Priya Sachdev Kapur and others to bypass the Supreme Court-mediated settlement process. —*ANI*

Supreme Court forms panel for court modernisation

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant has decided to set up a high-powered committee headed by Supreme Court Justice Aravind Kumar to prepare a blueprint for the modernisation of courts across the country and secure a government allocation of Rs 40,000 to Rs 50,000 crore for the purpose.

The CJI announced the constitution of the 'Judicial Infrastructure Advisory Committee' to address infrastructural deficiencies in courts through substantial financial support from the government.

Apart from Justice Kumar, the committee will comprise Justices Debangsu Basak, Ashwani Kumar Mishra, Somasekhar Sundaresan of the high courts of Calcutta, Punjab and Haryana, and Bombay, respectively. —*PTI*

Gas leak at Vizag steel plant: 4 workers fall ill

VISAKHAPATNAM, 12 MAY

Four workers fell unconscious after inhaling fumes following a gas leak at a thermal power plant area in Vishakapatnam Steel Plant here, a senior official said on Tuesday.

According to Vizag Steel Plant (VSP) Deputy General Manager (DGM) J Mallikarjun, the incident occurred around 4 pm on Monday when the workers, who were carrying out duties in the Thermal Power Plant (TPP) area, sensed the gas leak and collapsed shortly thereafter, he said.

"Minor gas leak occurred at the TPP area and four workers fell unconscious after inhaling the gas," Mallikarjun said.

The workers were immediately administered first-aid and shifted to a nearby hospital for treatment.

He said the workers were discharged later in the day after doctors confirmed that they were out of danger.

According to Mallikarjun, the leaked gas was suspected to be a Blast Furnace (BF) gas, which contains carbon monoxide and can be hazardous upon exposure.

The exact cause of the leak is yet to be ascertained and an inquiry has been giong on into the matter. —*PTI*

NIGHTMARE IN UTTARAKHAND

Dalit youth thrashed for drinking water at wedding

HALDWANI, 12 MAY

Two Dalit youths were allegedly beaten up and targeted with casteist slurs for drinking water from a pot during a wedding ceremony in Gaulapur area here, police said on Tuesday.

The incident took place in Deval Malla village on Sunday evening when Shubham, who was operating the DJ system at the event, drank water from a nearby utensil, according to police.

Umesh Chandra Tamta, the victim's brother, alleged in his complaint at the Kathgodam police station that both the brothers were targeted and hit

— AI

in the ensuing altercation.

He said a group of people started abusing Shubham with casteist remarks and then physically assaulted him.

The complaint stated that around 10 people attacked Shubham, leaving him with severe injuries. He is currently hospitalised and receiving treatment, police said.

Umesh further alleged that he, too, was beaten and struck on the head with a sharp-edged weapon when he tried to intervene.

A woman was also injured during the altercation, police said.

Following the incident, local villagers held a demonstration at the police station and demanded the immediate action. The opposing side has filed a counter-complaint, claiming that the allegations regarding caste-based remarks were false and fabricated.

Kathgodam SHO Vimal Mishra said both parties have submitted complaints and a probe is underway. —*PTI*

Fire in wings: Etihad plane grounded in Chennai

CHENNAI, 12 MAY

A flight bound for Abu Dhabi with about 280 passengers aborted its journey on Tuesday following a "fire" on its left wing, airport officials here said.

The Etihad flight was preparing for take-off when the pilots noticed the fire. Subsequently, all the passengers were safely disembarked and there were no injuries to anyone, officials added.

The fire was immediately put out by Fire Service personnel and the flight was cancelled.

Etihad Airways could not be reached immediately for a comment.

An Etihad Airways flight was grounded at Chennai airport after a suspected fire or smoke alert was reported from one of the aircraft's wings.

Emergency response teams and fire service personnel rushed to the spot immediately after smoke and flames were reportedly noticed near the wing of the aircraft.

The fire was quickly brought under control and extinguished, preventing any further damage or danger to passengers and crew members, according to a report.

"The flight is currently expected to depart approximately three hours behind schedule," the airline said in a statement.

Emergency services were activated as a precautionary measure, based on the Chennai International Airport (MAA) safety protocols, it said while apologising and assing the guests. —*PTI/Agencies*

NEET-UG cancelled: Here's what happens next

The cancellation of NEET-UG 2026 has left over 22 lakh medical aspirants and their families anxious about the next steps, including the fresh examination date, admit cards, examination centres and the counselling timeline.

While the National Testing Agency (NTA) is yet to issue detailed guidelines, here is an explainer on what is known so far.

NSUI members protest against NTA over NEET paper leak in New Delhi —PTI

Q) WHY WAS NEET-UG 2026 CANCELLED?
The NTA announced the cancellation of the 3 May examination following allegations of irregularities linked to the test. The matter is being probed by the Rajasthan Special Operations Group (SOG) and other agencies.

The agency has maintained that the examination was conducted under a "full security protocol", including GPS-tracked movement of question papers, biometric verification, AI-assisted CCTV monitoring and deployment of 5G jammers.

Q) WHEN WILL THE RE-EXAM BE HELD?
The fresh dates have not yet been announced. The NTA has said the examination will be reconducted on dates to be notified separately through official channels in the coming days.

Q) WILL STUDENTS HAVE TO REGISTER AGAIN?
No. The NTA has clarified that the registration data and candidature from the May 2026 cycle will be carried forward to the reconducted examination.

Q) WILL CANDIDATES HAVE TO PAY EXAM FEE AGAIN?
No additional examination fee will be charged. The NTA has also said that fees already paid by students will be refunded.

Q) WILL FRESH ADMIT CARDS BE ISSUED?
Yes. The NTA has said the "re-issued admit-card schedule" will be communicated through official channels.

Q) WILL STUDENTS GET THE SAME EXAM CENTRES?
The NTA has said the examination centres opted for in the May 2026 cycle will be carried forward to the reconducted examination. However, the agency has not yet clarified whether there could be any changes in centre allotment.

Q) WILL THE EXAM BE HELD AGAIN USING EXTERNAL AGENCIES?
The NTA has said the examination will be reconducted using its "internal resources".

Q) WHAT HAS THE GOVERNMENT DECIDED?
The government has decided to refer the matter to the CBI for a comprehensive inquiry. "NTA will extend full cooperation to the Bureau and will provide all materials, records, and assistance the inquiry requires," the agency said.

Q) WHY DID THE NTA DECIDE ON A RE-TEST?
According to the agency, the decision was taken "in the interest of students and in recognition of the trust on which the national examination system rests".

"The Agency is conscious that re-conduct will cause real and significant inconvenience to candidates and their families," it said, adding that allowing the examination process to stand would have caused "greater and more lasting damage" to public trust.

Q) WHAT SHOULD STUDENTS DO NOW?
Candidates and parents have been advised to rely only on official NTA channels for updates regarding re-examination dates, fresh admit cards and examination-related instructions. The agency has also asked students to disregard unverified reports circulating on social media.

Q) HAS NEET FACED CONTROVERSIES EARLIER TOO?
Yes. The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test has faced scrutiny in recent years over allegations of paper leaks and examination irregularities.

Here are some major NEET examination controversies over the years:

■ 2013: NEET FACES LEGAL CHALLENGE
NEET was introduced as a single entrance examination for medical admissions across India in 2013. However, a three-judge bench headed by then Chief Justice of India Altamas Kabir had then struck down NEET as unconstitutional on 18 July 2013.

■ 2016: NEET RESTORED, CONDUCTED IN TWO PHASES
The Supreme Court revived NEET in 2016 after recalling its earlier judgment. In 2016, the examination was conducted in two phases.

■ 2017: TAMIL NADU PROTESTS, ANITHA CASE
NEET became a major political issue in Tamil Nadu following the Anitha case, which intensified the debate around the examination in the state.

Medical aspirant S Anitha, who had challenged NEET in court, died by suicide after failing to secure admission. The incident led to intensified political opposition to the examination in the state.

■ 2019: TAMIL NADU IMPERSONATION SCAM
NEET came under scrutiny in 2019 after a major impersonation racket was uncovered in Tamil Nadu involving medical admissions.

Investigations revealed that several candidates had allegedly used proxy candidates to write the NEET examination and secure admission in medical colleges. The case came to light after discrepancies were noticed in students' appearance, signatures and academic records during verification processes. The probe led to multiple arrests, including students, parents, intermediaries and coaching centre-linked individuals. Cases were registered in cities including Chennai, Theni and Dharmapuri.

The controversy raised serious concerns over identity verification mechanisms in NEET and prompted tighter biometric checks and scrutiny during admissions and examinations.

■ 2020: COVID-19 CONCERNS
The conduct of NEET during the Covid-19 pandemic sparked nationwide debate.

Students and opposition parties sought postponement, citing public health risks, transport restrictions and flooding in some regions. The Supreme Court, however, allowed the examination to proceed.

■ 2022: KERALA DRESS CODE ROW
A controversy erupted in Kerala after female candidates alleged they were asked to remove innerwear containing metal hooks before entering examination centres.

■ 2024: PAPER LEAK, GRACE MARKS CONTROVERSY
NEET-UG 2024 witnessed massive controversy over allegations of paper leaks and award of grace marks.

Questions were raised after an unusually high number of candidates secured top ranks, including scores such as 718 and 719. A total of 67 candidates secured a perfect score of 720 out of 720. A re-exam for 1,563 candidates who received grace marks was held on June 23, 2024. NTA later said compensatory marks had been awarded to some candidates due to 'loss of examination time'. The matter reached the Supreme Court, while investigations into alleged paper leaks in Bihar and other states were handed over to the CBI.

In July 2024, the Supreme Court declined to order a nationwide re-test, saying there was insufficient evidence to establish a systemic breach affecting the entire examination.

■ PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS ON NEET
Following the NEET-UG 2024 controversy, the Centre constituted a high-level committee headed by former ISRO chief K Radhakrishnan to recommend reforms in the functioning of the NTA and conduct of entrance examinations.

Among the key recommendations being considered were minimising the outsourcing of staff and examination centres, conducting maximum entrance examinations online and adopting hybrid examination models where complete transition to computer-based testing may not be feasible.

The panel also proposed capping the number of attempts in major entrance examinations, including NEET, to streamline the process and reduce pressure on the system. —*PTI*

SALAR ساہر

Congress rebel Himanta is now BJP's Northeast face

Widely credited with the BJP's rise across the Northeast, Himanta Biswa Sarma's swearing-in as the Chief Minister of Assam for a second consecutive term indicates not only continuity in leadership but also the party's growing political entrenchment in the region.

Despite strong criticism by the Congress and a series of allegations against his wife, Sarma remained unfazed and helped the BJP achieve a dominant position in Assam, reshaping the region's political landscape in favour of the ruling NDA.

The 57-year-old leader vowed to continue the state's development journey, stating that his first tenure as CM was "just a trailer and the movie will unfold in the second term".

Despite his development initiatives, rolling out welfare schemes and the focus on safeguarding the land rights of indigenous communities, his first term had also been marked by controversial measures and rhetoric, particularly targeting Bengali-speaking Muslims of Bangladeshi descent.

Actions like eviction drives on alleged encroached land, a crackdown on child marriage, moves against polygamy, enforcement of the Cattle Protection Act, and closure of government-run madrasas have drawn criticism from opposition parties, which accuse him of deepening social polarisation.

He remained defiant through controversies, though a row involving allegations by Congress leader Pawan Khera against his wife led to a sharp exchange that even drew mention in a Supreme Court order granting relief to Khera.

Opposition parties, especially the Congress, have also repeatedly alleged corruption during his tenure and questioned the business dealings of his wife, but all these charges were denied by the chief minister.

Once regarded as the most influential politician in the Northeast, Sarma emerged as a key BJP campaigner and was instrumental in the party's emphatic victory with 82 seats of the 126-member assembly.

Political analysts, however, have criticised his rhetoric as divisive and unbecoming of a constitutional office-holder.

After losing his electoral debut in 1996, Sarma has represented Jalukbari continuously since 2001, winning as both a Congress and BJP candidate. A minister in successive governments since 2001, he earned a reputation for administrative effectiveness and political strategy.

Mentored by former Congress chief ministers Hiteswar Saikia and Tarun Gogoi, Sarma rose steadily within the party before differences with Gogoi led to his exit in 2015.

The BJP quickly inducted him, leveraging his influence to strengthen its presence in the Northeast.

As convenor of the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), he played a pivotal role in bringing all eight Northeastern states under the NDA's ambit, either through BJP governments or allied partners.

Sarma began his political journey during the anti-foreigner Assam Agitation of the 1980s, initially working with All Assam Students' Union (AASU) leaders such as Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and Bhrigu Kumar Phukan before entering mainstream politics.

He became a minister under Tarun Gogoi's leadership in 2001. Gogoi, impressed with Sarma's political skills, appointed him as minister of state for agriculture, planning and development and later during the same term, gave him additional responsibilities.

The Congress, facing an anti-incumbency wave in 2011, depended heavily on Sarma's skills in strategy and managed to come to power for the third time in a row. During this term, a rift developed between Sarma and Gogoi's son Gaurav.

Sarma was sidelined within the Congress, and he resigned from the ministry, the assembly and subsequently from the party in 2015, before joining the BJP.

He was instrumental, along with Sarbananda Sonowal, in forming the saffron party's first government in Assam in 2016. He held key portfolios including finance, health, education and public works before succeeding Sonowal as chief minister in 2021.

Born in Jorhat to noted Assamese poet and novelist Kailash Nath Sarma and literary activist Mrinalini Devi, he earned a master's degree in political science in 1992 and also a PhD in the same subject.

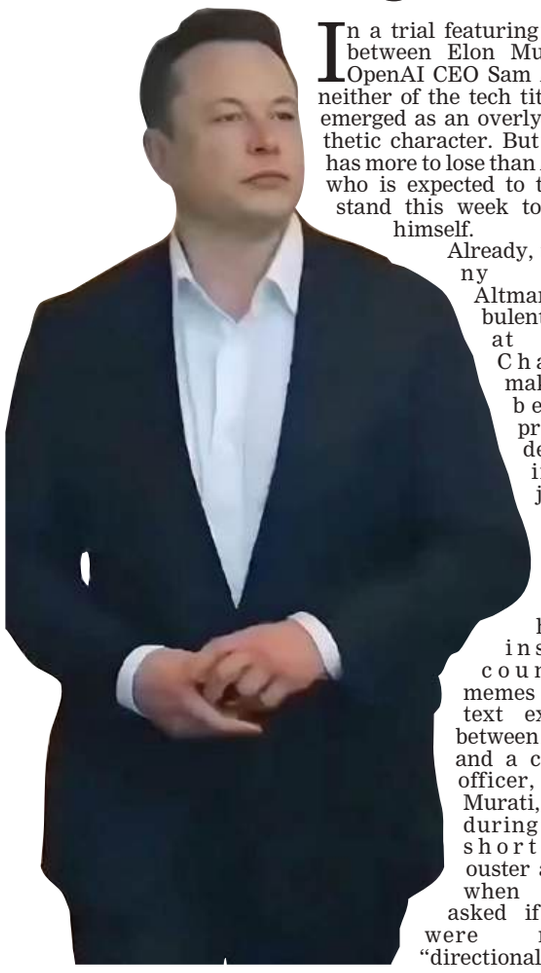
Sarma obtained an LLB degree in 1995 and practised at the Gauhati High Court for five years before entering politics in 2001. He has two children, a son and a daughter. —*PTI*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma during the swearing-in ceremony, at Khanapara in Guwahati —PTI

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Will trial against Musk turn Altman into 'America's most hated man'?



In a trial featuring a clash between Elon Musk and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, neither of the tech titans has emerged as an overly sympathetic character. But nobody has more to lose than Altman, who is expected to take the stand this week to defend himself.

Already, testimony about Altman's turbulent tenure at the ChatGPT maker has become prime fodder for internet jokes. One piece of evidence that has inspired countless memes was a text exchange between Altman and a company officer, Mira Murati, in 2023 during his short-lived ouster as CEO, when Altman asked if things were moving "directionally good or bad", and she wrote back: "Sam, this is very bad."

Musk, the world's richest man, is seeking Altman's second ouster from the company leadership as part of a civil lawsuit accusing him of betraying their shared vision for OpenAI. Since its start as a nonprofit funded primarily by Musk, OpenAI has evolved into a capitalistic venture now valued at USD 852 billion.

Even if Musk loses, the trial has invited further scrutiny of Altman's leadership at a pivotal time for the company and its competition with Musk's own AI firm and another rival, Anthropic, formed by a group of seven ex-OpenAI leaders. All three firms are moving toward planned initial public offerings that are expected to be some of the largest ever.

A jury that's already heard about Altman's character from a parade of his former allies and adversaries will ultimately decide the verdict. But the repercussions could reverberate widely.

"This is not looking good for any of them, and I think that that's a little bit unfortunate for the AI industry at a time when the public perception of AI is quite negative and seems to be getting worse," said Sarah Kreps, director of Cornell University's Tech Policy Institute.

Musk warned Altman would be one of America's most hated men

The lawsuit accuses Altman and his top lieutenant, Greg Brockman, of double-crossing Musk by straying from the San Francisco company's founding mission to be an altruistic steward of a revolutionary technology. The lawsuit alleges they shifted into a moneymaking mode behind his back.

Shortly before the trial, Musk abandoned a bid for damages for himself and instead is seeking an unspecified amount of money to be paid to fund the altruistic efforts of OpenAI's charitable arm. In a text exchange with Brockman proposing a possible settlement, Musk warned that Brockman and Altman "will be the most hated men in America" as a result of the trial.

While Musk, the head of SpaceX, Tesla and a slew of other companies, was well known by the San Francisco Bay Area jury pool, fewer knew who Altman was before the start of the trial.

As the trial has played out in a federal courtroom in Oakland, California, over the last two weeks, jurors have heard from witnesses, including OpenAI ex-board members Helen Toner and Tasha McCauley, who spoke about the decision to fire Altman in 2023 before they were themselves ousted from the board of directors when Altman returned to his role.

In video testimony last week, Toner said a starting point for the decision to oust Altman was when OpenAI co-founder Ilya Sutskever, a respected AI scientist, reached out to confide some of his own concerns.

Sutskever was instrumental in the unsuccessful attempt to oust Altman, but later said he regretted his role in the shakeup. In his own testimony, Sutskever confirmed that he wrote a 2023 memo to OpenAI's board that characterised Altman as pitting his executives against one another and exhibiting a "consistent pattern of lying" that was causing a loss of trust and productivity.

Sutskever said Altman's behaviour contributed to an environment that was "not conducive" to the company's goals, including its mission to safely build artificial general intelligence. He said he later backtracked and supported Altman's reinstatement because he was concerned about what would happen to a company he worked hard to create.

OpenAI begins presenting its side

The trial has also carried risks for Musk, who is pursuing an initial public offering this summer for his rocket ship maker, SpaceX, which could make him the world's first trillionaire. Among the witnesses has been Shivon Zilis, a former OpenAI board member who served as a conduit between Musk and OpenAI's leaders and also didn't disclose that Musk was the father of her two young twins. Not until midday Monday, on the third week of the trial, did OpenAI begin calling its own witnesses, starting with Bret Taylor, the current chair of OpenAI's board, who painted a more positive portrait of Altman's leadership.

"I think Sam has done a great job as CEO," Taylor said. "He's been forthright with the other board members and me." Syracuse University professor Shubha Ghosh, an expert in business and technology law, said he has doubts about Altman staying on as CEO of OpenAI. —*PTI*

Won't resign: SA Prez on probe into cash in his sofa

CAPE TOWN, 12 MAY

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa announced he will not resign despite the establishment of an impeachment committee to investigate allegations of misconduct over the theft of over half a million dollars hidden in a sofa at his game ranch. In a televised address, Ramaphosa said he would legally challenge a parliamentary report that found credible evidence of wrongdoing, which could delay impeachment. The move follows a Constitutional Court ruling that a 2022 parliamentary vote blocking impeachment was unconstitutional, as the independent report recommended further investigation. Ramaphosa, who took office in 2018 on an anti-corruption platform, denies wrongdoing, claiming the money was from a legitimate buffalo sale. —*PTI*

Vance or Rubio: Trump polls 2028 race attendees

WASHINGTON, 12 MAY

US President Donald Trump hosted a dinner for law enforcement leaders in the Rose Garden on Monday evening, where he sought to project Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio as a potential team for the 2028 presidential election. "Is it gonna be JD? Is it gonna be someone else? I don't know," Trump said, conducting an impromptu poll that drew laughter. He asked, "Who likes JD Vance?" and "Who likes Marco Rubio?" as attendees cheered. Trump clarified, "Sounds like a good ticket," but added, "That was a perfect ticket. By the way, I do believe that's a dream team, but these are minor details. That does not mean you have my endorsement under any circumstance." —*PTI*

Eight killed in vehicle blast in northwest Pak

PESHAWAR, 12 MAY

At least eight people, including two security officials, were killed and 35 injured when a suicide bomber detonated an explosive-laden vehicle in northwest Pakistan, police confirmed. The incident took place in Lakki Marwat district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A District Police official said the bomber targeted a three-wheeler auto rickshaw at Phattak Chowk in Naurang Bazar. Among the dead were two traffic police personnel and a woman. The injured were taken to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital in Sarai Naurang; some in critical condition were transferred to hospitals in Bannu and Peshawar. An emergency was declared, and medical staff were mobilised. —*PTI*

Israeli bulldozes 50 Palestinian shops to build a highway

AL-EIZARIYA, 12 MAY

Israeli bulldozers tore down around 50 Palestinian shops on the edge of a town southeast of Jerusalem this week, clearing land ahead of a settlement-linked road project in the occupied West Bank. Israel says the demolitions are needed to make way for a road serving local Palestinian communities. But Palestinian officials say the road is part of a broader plan to keep Palestinian vehicles off a new highway being built to for nearby Israeli settlements. That project is part of a strategic section of the West Bank known as E1, which Israel claims it is developing with the intention of preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state. The project displace thousands of Bedouin Arabs, said Hagit Ofran, director of Peace Now. —*PTI*

80 Labour MPs ask Starmer to step down; he remains defiant

LONDON, 12 MAY

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer remained defiant as around 80 MPs from his Labour party reportedly called for him to set out a timetable for a leadership change.

During a crunch Cabinet meeting at 10 Downing Street, Starmer told his team that he intends to "get on with governing" as he tries to move on from the Labour Party's disastrous local election under his watch.

Starmer was adamant the required threshold of 20 per cent MPs to challenge the Labour leader had not been met, even as lesser-known junior housing minister, Miatta Fahnbulleh, resigned.

At least 81 Labour MPs are required to mount a public challenge.

"The past 48 hours have been destabilising for government, and that has a real economic cost for our country and for families. The Labour Party has a process for challenging a leader and that has not been triggered," Starmer said.

His statement could be seen as a dare by some Labour Members of Parliament.

According to media reports, some senior Cabinet figures, including influential Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood and Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper, are among those calling for Starmer to go. Others like Deputy Prime Minister David Lammy and Defence Secretary John Healey are also believed to be in favour of an orderly transition plan.

This comes after former Indo-Pacific minister Catherine West gave notice that she was collecting names to push Starmer into setting a timetable for the "election of a new leader in September".

The frontrunners in the race to replace Starmer include Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham, Health Secretary Wes Streeting and former deputy prime minister Angela Rayner. —*PTI*

Pakistan denies hosting Iran jets during the war

Iranian F-4 Phantom II fighter jets (file) —**PRESSTV**

Says jets came after ceasefire; Kuwait foils Iran attack on island

ISLAMABAD, 12 MAY

Pakistan on Tuesday rejected as "misleading and sensationalised" a US media report that claimed Islamabad allowed Iranian military aircraft to park on its airfield to shield them from American airstrikes, despite being the mediator between the two sides.

In a statement, the Pakistan Foreign Office said that the Iranian aircraft currently parked in the country arrived during the ceasefire period following the initial round of US-Iran peace talks and bears "no linkage" to any military contingency or preservation arrangement, and asserted that it was being impartial.

CBS News reported that days after US President Donald Trump announced the ceasefire with Iran in early April, Tehran sent multiple aircraft to the Nur Khan Airbase near Rawalpindi.

"Among the military hardware was an Iranian Air Force RC-130, a reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering variant of the Lockheed C-130 Hercules tactical transport aircraft," the report claimed.

Pakistan said such narratives seemed "aimed at undermining ongoing efforts for regional peace".

But, the ceasefire appeared to be crumbling regardless.

Kuwait accused Iran of sending an armed Revolutionary Guard team to attack its Bubiyan Island that is home to a China-funded port project. The island is in the northwest corner of the Persian Gulf near Iraq and Iran. Kuwait said that it detained four of the men, while two escaped.

Bubiyan Island is home to Mubarak Al Kabeer Port, which is under construction as part of China's "Belt and Road" initiative.

Similarly, Israel's strikes on Lebanon continued, with at least four people killed, according to National News Agency. Israel aslo issued evacuation warnings for four villages.

This comes ahead of Trump's three-day visit to Beijing. He will arrive on Wednesday and is likely to meet President Xi Jinping on Thursday.

Trump, who said the ceasefire was on a "lifeline", flayed the Kurds, claiming that they "take, take, take", a reference to reports that the US sought to arm Iranian protesters through groups, but they stole the arms. —*Agencies*

> **If this reporting is accurate, it would require a complete reevaluation of the role Pakistan is playing as mediator between Iran, the United States and other parties. Given some of the prior statements by Pakistani defense officials towards Israel, I would not be shocked if this were true**
>
> —Lindsey Graham, US Senator and warhawk

UAE carried out covert strikes on Iran: Report

DUBAI/ TEL AVIV, 12 MAY

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) carried out covert strikes on Iran before the ceasefire took effect, according to a report.

The UAE strike included an attack on a refinery located on Iran's Lavan Island in the Persian Gulf, in early April, the Wall Street Journal reported, citing sources. The strike triggered a major fire at the refinery and disrupted much of its operational capacity for several months. This attack came around the time Trump announced a ceasefire.

At the time, Iran responded by launching missile and drone strikes against the UAE and Kuwait in retaliation.

Notably, throughout the war, Iran has sent the launched the most number of drones and missiles at the UAE. Reports suggest that at least 2,800 drones were launched at the UAE, significantly impacting the monarchy's aviation, tourism and real estate sectors, while also triggering layoffs and furloughs.

The UAE has not publicly acknowledged carrying out strikes, and the Pentagon and White House refused to comment. However, WSJ noted that open-source researchers have stated that French-made Mirage fighter jets and Chinese Wing Loong drones, used by the UAE, were seen operating in Iran.

Meanwhile, US envoy to Israel Mike Huckabee confirmed that Israel sent Iron Dome anti-missile batteries and personnel to the UAE. —*Agencies*

> **Had the Israeli plan to ignite war between us and Iran succeeded, the region would have been plunged into ruin and destruction... Thousands of our sons and daughters would have been lost in a battle in which we had no stake. Israel would have succeeded in imposing its will on the region and remained the only actor in our surroundings... When Iran and others tried to drag the Kingdom into the furnace of destruction, our leadership chose to endure the pains**
>
> —Turki al-Faisal, Saudi Prince, writing for Arab News

Pak extends countrywide austerity drive

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has extended the countrywide austerity drive till 13 June. The measures were initially announced for two months on 9 March and included curbs on official vehicles. Pakistan's central bank said the war poses "significant risks to the macroeconomic outlook" and projected its GDP growth on the lower end.

I am the father of fertility: Trump in White House

Trump said that he was "the father of fertility" and learnt everything there was to know about it in three-four minutes, while announcing that the Department of Labor would formally create a fertility benefit option that employers could offer outside traditional health insurance plans at the White House on Monday.

US to loan 53M barrels of oil from reserves to cos

The US government said it will loan energy companies 53.3 million barrels of crude from the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve to calm oil markets. The Department of Energy had earlier loaned about 80 million barrels as it seeks to release a total of 172 million barrels. Trump said he will move to suspend the federal tax on gasoline to help citizens shoulder surging fuel prices.

Delcy hits back after Trump mulls making Venezuela 51st state

THE HAGUE, 12 MAY

Venezuelan acting President Delcy Rodríguez hit back after US President Donald Trump said he was "seriously considering" making the South American nation the 51st US state.

Speaking at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Rodríguez told journalists that: "We will continue to defend our integrity, our sovereignty, our independence, our history".

Rodriquez, who came to power after the US captured then president Nicolas Maduro in January, added that Venezuela is "not a colony, but a free country". After Maduro's ouster, Venezuela largely opened up its economy, including oil markets, to the US market.

Trump had earlier said that Canada should become the US' 51st state, but reportedly told Fox News that he was now considering making it Venezuela. The White House is yet to comment on the issue.

Rodriquez was in the Netherlands due to a dispute between Venezuela and neighbouring Guyana over the massive mineral- and oil-rich Essequibo region. —*PTI*

Zelenskyy's ex-chief of staff accused of money laundering

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy meets Palantir CEO Alex Karp on Tuesday. Ukraine is looking to expand its use of AI in drone warfare, launching the "Brave1 Dataroom" that has coalated data from its war with Russia. Palantir said in a statement that its ties with Ukraine will define how the West fights —*X @ZELENSKYYUA*

KYIV, 12 MAY

Two national agencies fighting corruption in Ukraine on Monday named President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's former chief of staff Andriy Yermak as an official suspect in an alleged 460-million-hryvnia (USD 10.5 million) money-laundering scheme.

The move by Ukraine's National Anti-Corruption Bureau and the Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office is a step short of formally charging Yermak, who resigned in November. He was the country's lead negotiator in talks with the US and left during the scandal that brought the biggest threat to Zelenskyy's government since Russia's full-scale invasion.

Investigators said Yermak is suspected of being involved in laundering money through construction projects near Kyiv. They searched his home in November. No other suspects have been naamed. A decision on whether to bring formal charges against Yermak could still take months.

Zelenskyy's press officer Dmytro Lytvyn said "the investigation is ongoing, it's early to draw conclusions."

The corruption scandal could hurt Ukraine's bid to join the European Union. —*PTI*

Israel sets up tribunal seeking death penalty for 7 Oct attackers

The Hamas-led 7 October, 2023 attack led to the deaths of 1,200 people as the militants took 251 hostages, resulting in Israel's devasting offensive —*ANI*

JERUSALEM, 12 MAY

Israeli lawmakers approved a bill on Monday setting up a special tribunal that would aims to have the authority to sentence to death Palestinians convicted of taking part in the Hamas-led attack on 7 October.

The measure passed 93-0 in the 120-seat Knesset (Israeli Parliament) reflecting widespread support for punishing those found guilty for the deadliest attack in Israel's history. The remaining 27 lawmakers were absent or abstained from voting.

Rights groups have criticised the measure, saying it makes the death penalty too easy to impose and does away with procedures safeguarding the right to a fair trial. Defendants can only appeal in special courts.

The bill allows a panel of judges to hand down the death penalty by majority vote, and the trial will be conducted in a livestreamed Jerusalem courtroom. This has drawn comparisons to 1962 trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, the last person sentenced to death in Israel, although the offence remains legal for acts such as genocide.

Opponents also say that livestreaming the proceedings before guilt is established risks turning the trials into a spectacle.

On 7 October, 2023, Hamas-led militants stormed Israel and took 251 people as hostages. At least 1,200 people were killed on the day. Israel responded by carpet bombing Gaza, killing at least 72,628 Palestinians over three years, including at least 846 killed since a ceasefire took hold last October. —*PTI*

'AIDING PROPAGANDA'

South Cali Mayor to plead guilty for acting as Chinese spy

LOS ANGELES, 12 MAY

The mayor of Arcadia in California, Eileen Wang, has agreed to plead guilty to acting as an illegal agent for the Chinese government and has resigned from her city position, officials announced Monday. Charged in April, Wang, aged 58, was accused of doing the bidding of Chinese officials, such as sharing articles favourable to Beijing, without informing the US government as required by law.

She was elected to the city council in November 2022, with the mayor chosen on a rotating basis. City manager Dominic Lazzaretto clarified that no city finances or staff were involved and that the conduct in question ceased after Wang's swearing-in in December 2022. Federal officials said she would plead guilty to a felony, which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison.

Wang's lawyers, Jason Liang and Brian Sun, stated she recognises the seriousness of the

charge and accepts responsibility for "past personal mistakes," expressing her regret and emphasising her love for the Arcadia community.

According to her plea agreement, Wang and colleague Yaoning "Mike" Sun worked for Chinese officials from 2020 to 2022 to promote pro-PRC propaganda in the US, operating the US News Center website.

Wang is expected to appear in court today and enter her plea in the coming weeks. Arcadia, a majority-Asian city near Los Angeles, has a population of about 53,000. —*PTI*

Civil Guard border police officers at Canary Islands —*PTI*

Spain reports new hantavirus case; WHO warns nations

THE HAGUE, 12 MAY

A Spanish passenger evacuated from the cruise ship at the centre of a hantavirus outbreak has tested positive for the virus, Spain's health ministry announced on Tuesday, as the World Health Organisation confirmed 11 cases, including three people from the cruise who died and urged countries to follow its protocols.

The passenger with the new confirmed case of hantavirus was in quarantine in a military hospital in Madrid.

The passenger was quarantined in the same hospital as 13 other Spanish nationals evacuated on Sunday, who all tested negative for the virus.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus urged countries to follow the WHO's advice and recommendations, which include a 42-day quarantine and constant monitoring of high-risk contacts.

"At the moment, there is no sign that we are seeing the start of a larger outbreak, but of course the situation could change and, given the long incubation period of the virus, it's possible we might see more cases in the coming weeks," he told a press conference in Madrid on Tuesday. —*PTI*

Food gets costlier as retail inflation hits 4-month high

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

India's retail inflation rose slightly to 3.48 per cent in April 2026 from 3.40 per cent in March, mainly due to higher food prices, according to data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on Tuesday.

Retail inflation measures the increase in prices paid by consumers for everyday goods and services. The rise in April was driven largely by costlier tomatoes, jewellery and coconut products, although prices of some vegetables declined sharply.

Food inflation, measured by the Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI), increased to 4.20 per cent in April from 3.87 per cent in March. Rural areas recorded higher food inflation at 4.26 per cent, compared with 4.10 per cent in urban centres.

Tomato prices remained high, rising 35.28 per cent year-on-year. The sharpest increase was seen in silver jewellery prices, which surged 144.34 per cent, while gold, diamond and platinum jewellery rose 40.72 per cent. Coconut copra prices climbed 44.55 per cent and cauliflower prices increased 25.58 per cent.

However, inflation was eased by falling vegetable prices. Potato prices dropped 23.69 per cent, while onion prices declined 17.67 per cent compared with a year earlier. Prices of motor cars, peas, chickpeas and air conditioners also fell.

Overall rural inflation stood at 3.74 per cent, while urban inflation was lower at 3.16 per cent. Housing inflation remained moderate at 2.15 per cent nationally.

The government said price data was collected from over 1,400 urban markets and nearly 1,500 villages across India. *—PTI*

Markets bleed Rs 17L cr after PM's austerity appeal

Sensex slips below 75K after tanking 2%; Nifty tumbles 1.83%

MUMBAI, 12 MAY

Investors lost nearly Rs 17 lakh crore in four trading sessions as Indian equity markets continued their sharp decline on Tuesday, with the Sensex and Nifty tumbling nearly 2 per cent amid surging crude oil prices, a weakening rupee and fears over the escalating West Asia conflict.

The sell-off intensified after Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged citizens to use petrol, diesel and cooking gas sparingly and avoid purchasing gold for a year amid the ongoing Iran conflict, triggering concerns about tougher economic conditions ahead.

The 30-share BSE Sensex plunged 1,456.04 points, or 1.92 per cent, to close at 74,559.24, while the NSE Nifty fell 436.30 points, or 1.83 per cent, to settle at 23,379.55. Over the past four sessions, the Sensex has crashed 3,400 points, or 4.4 per cent, while the Nifty has shed 4 per cent.

—AI

The overall market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies fell to Rs 456 lakh crore from Rs 473 lakh crore on 6 May. On Tuesday alone, 3,412 stocks declined on the BSE, compared with just 869 advances.

Analysts said investor sentiment was hit by rising crude oil prices, continued foreign fund outflows and the rupee weakening to a record low of 95.63 against the US dollar. Brent crude rose 2.75 per cent to USD 107.1 per barrel.

Vinod Nair of Geojit Investments said the decline was broad-based, led by IT and realty shares. Tech stocks came under pressure amid concerns over AI-driven pricing disruptions following recent enterprise adoption initiatives by OpenAI.

From the Sensex pack, Tech Mahindra, Adani Ports, HCL Tech, TCS, Titan and Bharat Electronics were major losers, while State Bank of India was the only gainer.

Sectorally, realty fell 4.22 per cent, followed by IT, services and consumer durables. Midcap and smallcap indices also declined sharply.

Foreign institutional investors sold equities worth Rs 8,437.56 crore on Monday, exchange data showed. *—PTI*

India's 10-yr bond yield surpasses 7% amid tense globe

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

The Indian 10-year government bond yield breached 7 per cent, reaching 7.031 per cent, amid global geopolitical tensions and persistent inflation concerns. The Bank of Baroda's report predicts the yield will fluctuate between 6.9 and 7.1 per cent this month, with risks tilted to the upside. "The cut-off yield for the New GS2036 at 6.94 per cent suggests yields will hover around that range," the report states. Yields remain high due to ongoing global conflicts, including reports of the US rejecting Iran's peace plan. Markets await India's inflation data, with CPI exceeding 4 per cent posing a significant risk. Despite domestic liquidity remaining comfortable at 0.8 per cent of NDTL, global trends continue to influence India's bond market. *—ANI*

Labour reforms operational, pro-poor: Mansukh

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya announced on Tuesday that the central government has fully operationalised the four new labour codes, emphasising that the current administration is pro-poor and industry-friendly. Speaking at the CII Annual Business Summit 2026, he stated that labour and industry should work together and adapt to change for effective coordination. The four codes, consolidating 29 labour laws into a simplified framework, came into effect from 21 November, 2025, after being fully implemented this month by publishing rules. The codes include the Code on Wages (2019), the Industrial Relations Code (2020), the Code on Social Security (2020), and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code (2020). Mandaviya said the reforms aim to end "Inspector Raaj" and make inspectors facilitators, offering industry a single registration and window. He highlighted that labour is as vital as industry, emphasising the government's pro-poor, pro-farmer stance alongside industry support. The reforms guarantee minimum wages, social security, equal pay for women, and better worker protection. *—ANI*

Oil firms' losses could hit Rs 1 lakh cr in one quarter: Puri

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

India has sufficient fuel reserves and faces no immediate supply concerns despite disruptions to global energy flows, Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Tuesday. However, he warned that state-run fuel retailers could incur losses of up to Rs 1 lakh crore in a single quarter if crude oil prices remain elevated and retail fuel prices stay unchanged.

Speaking at the CII Annual Business Summit, Puri said India currently holds around 60 days of crude oil and LNG inventories and 45 days of LPG reserves. He added that domestic LPG production has risen to 54,000 tonnes per day from 36,000 tonnes earlier.

However, he acknowledged mounting financial pressure on state-owned oil marketing companies (OMCs), which have kept petrol, diesel and LPG prices stable despite soaring global crude prices linked to the ongoing conflict in West Asia.

According to the minister, combined under-recoveries on petrol, diesel and LPG have reached nearly Rs 1.98 lakh crore this quarter, with actual losses estimated at around Rs 1 lakh crore. OMCs are currently losing Rs 14 per litre on petrol, Rs 42 on diesel and Rs 674 per LPG cylinder.

Puri said no decision had been taken on fuel price hikes but admitted concerns over how long companies could absorb losses. He stressed there was "absolutely no cause for anxiety", ruling out any possibility of rationing or lockdowns.

The minister also urged industries and households to shift towards piped natural gas, describing it as cleaner, cheaper and crucial for reducing import dependence and easing fiscal strain. *—PTI*

WEST ASIA WAR TESTS INDIA'S RESILIENCE: CEA

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

The West Asia war is a "live balance of payments stress test," impacting inflation, the current account, and the exchange rate, said Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran. Despite these challenges, India's fiscal consolidation, infrastructure investment, and reforms offer a strong base to navigate the conflict.

He highlighted that 87 per cent of India's crude requirement is imported, with 46 per cent transiting through or near the Strait of Hormuz, where tanker traffic has fallen to five vessels.

Nageswaran emphasised that managing the current account and preventing currency depreciation are macroeconomic priorities for FY27.

He noted that India's strong foundations position it well, but strategic rethinking is necessary amid a geopolitically contested global environment. *—PTI*

PM'S CALL TO AVOID GOLD

Jaipur gold traders fear demand slump

JAIPUR, 12 MAY

Jaipur's gold jewellery market has voiced concern over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to avoid purchasing gold for a year, with traders warning that reduced demand could severely impact the city's gems and jewellery industry.

Industry representatives said more than two lakh traders, artisans and employees are directly or indirectly dependent on the sector in Jaipur, one of India's leading hubs for gems and jewellery. They cautioned that any prolonged slowdown would disproportionately affect small artisans and labourers.

Ajay Kala, secretary of the Jaipur Chamber of Commerce and Industries, said Rajasthan consumes nearly 42–45 tonnes of gold annually, largely driven by weddings, traditional jewellery and gemstone-studded ornaments. He noted that the depreciation of the rupee against the US dollar has already made gold imports costlier, increasing production expenses for jewellers.

Kala added that high import duties and GST have pushed up prices for consumers, and any further decline in demand would disrupt the entire trade. He warned that reduced gold imports could impact exports of finished jewellery from Jaipur, affecting foreign exchange earnings.

INDIA'S RELIANCE ON GOLD IMPORTS

- India is the **2nd-largest gold importer** after China.
- **$72 billion** worth of gold imported in 2024, 24% more from 2025.
- **90% of India's** annual gold demand is imported.
- Gold makes up nearly 9% of India's total import bill, India's second-largest import expense after crude oil

Kala urged the government to distinguish between consumption-driven and export-oriented imports, promote gold schemes and support export-led jewellery manufacturing. *—PTI*

GOLD JUMPS ₹1,500, SILVER SURGES 4%

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Gold and silver prices surged sharply in domestic markets on Tuesday, driven by a weaker rupee, strong local demand and ongoing geopolitical tensions.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, 99.9 per cent purity gold rose by Rs 1,500, or nearly 1 per cent, to Rs 1,56,800 per 10g, compared with Rs 1,55,300 in the previous session.

Silver saw an even steeper rise, jumping Rs 12,000, or 4.53 per cent, to Rs 2,77,000 per kg from Rs 2,65,000 earlier.

Analysts said the rise reflected investor caution amid uncertainty over US–Iran relations and expectations ahead of key US inflation data.

However, in international markets, gold fell about 1 per cent to USD 4,692 per ounce, while silver dropped over 3 per cent. *—PTI*

India's Russian crude imports fall over 15% in April

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

India's crude oil imports from Russia fell by more than 15 per cent in April 2026, mainly due to a planned maintenance shutdown at a key refinery, according to a report by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA).

India imported about Euro 4.5 billion worth of Russian crude in April, down from uro 5.3 billion in March. Overall Russian hydrocarbon imports stood at €5 billion, making India the second-largest buyer of Russian fossil fuels after China.

CREA said crude oil accounted for 90 per cent of India's purchases, with coal and oil products making up the rest. Total Russian imports declined from Euro 5.8 billion in March.

The fall was linked to reduced unloading at refineries such as Vadinar and Jamnagar, though some state refiners resumed purchases after earlier pauses. The Vadinar refinery, operated by Nayara Energy, underwent maintenance shutdowns in April.

Despite the monthly dip, Russian crude trade remained strong following US sanctions waivers allowing previously delayed shipments.

CREA noted China remained the largest buyer of Russian crude, while India accounted for 37 per cent of total exports. *—PTI*

'Petroleum coke shortage to hit aluminium industry'

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Aluminium production outside the Gulf may face disruptions if petroleum coke shortages worsen, warned JP Morgan. The report highlighted that petroleum coke, a vital raw material in aluminium manufacturing, could become a major challenge globally amid the ongoing conflict in the Persian Gulf. It stated that if the Strait of Hormuz remains closed and shortages become severe, aluminium producers outside the Gulf may encounter operational difficulties or need to cut production.

It said, "If petroleum coke shortages become acute, additional aluminium supply outside the Gulf could face operational challenges or be forced to curtail production." The report noted that about 20 per cent of global petroleum coke supply is impacted by the Strait of Hormuz closure, as it is produced during oil refining. Major supply disruptions are already occurring due to the conflict and shipping disruptions.

JP Morgan projects a deficit of around 2 million tonnes in the global aluminium market in 2026. The report also warned that alumina shipment disruptions could lead to further shutdowns, and both calcined and green petroleum coke markets are under pressure.

Prices in the US Gulf have increased by approximately 20 per cent since the conflict began.

The report concluded that while petroleum coke production may restart faster, aluminium smelting could take 12-18 months, with recovery timing uncertain. *—ANI*

'BRACE FOR BIG SHOCK'

India must not rely on foreign funds: Kotak

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Banking veteran Uday Kotak on Tuesday urged India to reduce dependence on foreign capital and strengthen domestic long-term risk capital to achieve genuine economic self-reliance.

Speaking at a Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) event, the founder of Kotak Mahindra Bank said a truly "Aatmanirbhar" nation is one that does not rely on "somebody else's money or power".

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to hold weddings in India instead of abroad, Kotak said the message reflected the need to strengthen domestic economic foundations amid an increasingly fragmented global order.

Kotak remarked that "India has financialised too early", with many firms focusing excessively on quarterly earnings, stock prices and employee stock option gains rather than building businesses with a three-to-five-year outlook.

He urged companies to reinvest profits instead of managing large treasury portfolios, questioning whether Corporate India was fully utilising the benefits of lower tax rates to drive fresh investments.

Kotak also said governments are poor allocators of capital and argued that policy support should encourage new investments through additional allowances rather than relying solely on tax incentives.

He stressed the need to strengthen India's economic "balance sheet and P&L" by boosting domestic production, increasing exports and reducing import dependence.

While acknowledging improved macroeconomic stability, including lower current account deficits and stronger forex reserves, Kotak warned vulnerabilities remain if oil prices surge or foreign capital flows reverse. *—PTI*

- "We haven't seen the impact of the war in two months, but now it's coming, and it's coming big," Kotak warned. "You are not far away from the shock unless the Iran war stops tomorrow morning. We need to get ready for tough times rather than waiting for the shock to hit us." Kotak noted that while the direct economic fallout of Iran war has been largely muted over the last eight weeks, that grace period is ending.

IRAN WAR EFFECT

Moody's slashes India GDP to 6%, flags energy import dependence

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Moody's Ratings on Tuesday reduced India's economic growth forecast for 2026 to 6 per cent from 6.8 per cent, citing higher energy costs, weaker consumer spending and slower industrial activity caused by global tensions in West Asia.

In its latest Global Macro Outlook, the ratings agency said India's economy is particularly vulnerable because the country imports nearly 90 per cent of its crude oil and a large share of its liquefied natural gas (LNG) needs.

Moody's also lowered India's 2027 growth estimate to 6 per cent, down by 0.5 percentage points, though it expects conditions to gradually improve as shipping routes stabilise and energy supplies recover.

The agency warned that prolonged disruptions linked to tensions between the US and Iran, including shipping blockades around the Strait of Hormuz, could push up global oil and food prices further. India imports around 60 per cent of its LPG consumption, and most of it passes through the now-closed route.

Moody's noted that coal still accounts for nearly 70 per cent of India's electricity generation, while renewable sources such as solar, wind and hydro power continue to expand. However, the country remains heavily dependent on imported fossil fuels for transport and cooking gas.

According to Moody's, higher fuel and fertiliser costs could strain government finances, reduce planned public spending and keep inflation elevated. Businesses may also face lower profits and weaker investment conditions.

While India may benefit from higher agricultural export prices as a major grain producer, the overall impact is expected to slow growth.

Moody's said Asia-Pacific remains the most exposed region to the crisis. While China is partly protected by its reliance on coal and renewable energy, India remains highly dependent on imported energy. *—PTI*

—X/CSK

Would love to see Dhoni in ETPL: Abhishek Bachchan

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Six years after retiring from international cricket, Mahendra Singh Dhoni continues to command unmatched fandom with actor and ETPL co-founder Abhishek Bachchan saying he would love to see the former India captain feature in the new European T20 Premier League. "Mahendra Singh Dhoni," Bachchan replied instantly when asked which Indian cricketer he would most like to see in the ETPL and why. "Do you need a reason why you want to see Mahendra Singh Dhoni in cricket?" he told PTI from Dublin. Dhoni, who retired from international cricket in 2020, remains part of the Chennai Super Kings squad but has not played this season due to a calf injury. —*PTI*

Dravid to let Ashwin take team's cricketing calls

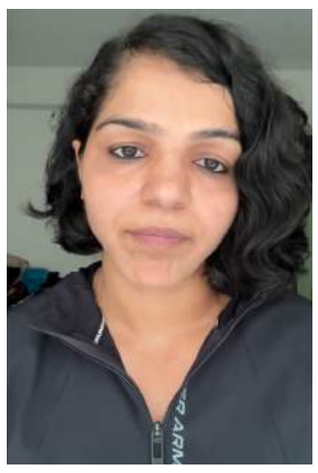
NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Rahul Dravid, who now owns the Dublin Guardians franchise in European T20 League (ETPL), said that he would refrain from getting into the cricketing side of the team as he wants skipper Ravichandran Ashwin to have complete freedom while taking decisions. Despite his vast cricketing knowledge having been involved with top flight cricket for 30 years, Dravid has understood that in his new role, he needs to maintain a distance.

"I think honestly, the plan is for me to not actually get involved in the cricketing side of things. So to put together a good team that can do the job on a day-to-day basis. You certainly won't see me in the dugout. And I'm not someone who's going to be there at every practice session. Or for that matter, not there for even every game," Dravid said. —*PTI*

WFI blocking Vinesh's comeback: Sakshi

Says world is easing rules to help new moms play while India is making it difficult for Vinesh



NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Olympic bronze-winning grappler Sakshi Malik on Tuesday supported Vinesh Phogat in her tussle with the Wrestling Federation of India over coming back from retirement, saying that attempts are being made to block her at a time when countries world over are relaxing norms to help new mothers resume their careers.

A defiant Vinesh showed up at the National Open Ranking Tournament in Gonda even though WFI had declared her ineligible. While issuing a lengthy showcause notice to her, the WFI said she could not be allowed to compete due to the mandatory six-month notice period that athletes need to serve before returning from retirement under anti-doping rules

Vinesh, who is the mother of a 10-month old son, has responded to the notice and refused to back down despite WFI's strict position. Sakshi was a close ally of Vinesh during the highly-publicised protest against alleged sexual harassment by WFI's then President Brij Bhushan Singh Sharan but broke ranks after Vinesh joined the Congress party.

Vinesh had quit wrestling after being shockingly disqualified from the finals of the 2024 Paris Olympics for being 100gm over the prescribed weight limit. The shattered Haryana grappler eventually joined politics and was elected from the Julana constituency the same year.

- "Vinesh is an MLA from a political party and I have nothing to do with any political outfit. (But) I can give you plenty of examples of countries relaxing norms for their athletes, so that women can continue to play and win medals for the country even after becoming mothers," she said.

PROTEST HURT CAREER MOMENTUM

Meanwhile, Asian Games silver medallist Deepak Punia believes the disruption caused by the wrestlers' protest at jantar mantar and the resulting lack of international exposure derailed the momentum of several Indian wrestlers, including his own, as he attempts to revive his career this season.

Once considered India's most consistent wrestler in the 86kg category, Deepak has struggled to regain his earlier rhythm after narrowly missing out on a bronze medal at the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo. Since then, his only major podium finish has been a silver medal at the Asian Games in 2023.

Deepak said the long phase of uncertainty in Indian wrestling following the wrestlers' protest significantly impacted athletes by reducing international competition opportunities and exposure. —*PTI*

RCB batters search solidity against KKR

Never skipping putting in the hard yards ft. Swapnil Singh. —X/RCB

RAIPUR, 12 MAY

Royal Challengers Bengaluru will require a significantly punchier batting effort to overcome Kolkata Knight Riders' in-form bowling unit and close in on an IPL playoffs berth here on Wednesday.

RCB are currently perched atop the points table with 14 points, but they will lose that spot to either Sunrisers Hyderabad or Gujarat Titans, who also have 14 points.

However, more than that temporary slip, the RCB management will be focussed on their batters, who would be expected to deliver the signature effort, which marked their campaign early this season.

The Bengaluru batting unit was a pale shadow of its fear-inducing self against Mumbai Indians while chasing a middling 167 here. They needed a determined half-century from Krunal Pandya and a six in the fourth ball of the final over from Bhuvneshwar Kumar to chase that down.

The RCB team will be up against a potent Knight Riders' bowling unit that has mystery spinners Sunil Narine and Varun Chakravarthy, who have been well-supported by domestic names like Kartik Tyagi, Vaibhav Arora and Anukul Roy. Their superb outings have helped the Kolkatans register four wins on the trot after faltering initially.

If the Raipur pitch retains its tacky character from the previous match, then the RCB batters will have one heck of a job at hand against a competent set of KKR bowlers. But the three-time champions are still eighth on the table with nine points from 10 matches, and a misadventure here will certainly push them closer to elimination from the play-offs race. —*PTI*

NO MAJOR CHANGES DESPITE LOSING STREAK: PBKS COACH BAHUTULE

"I think the team that has been doing so well. Yes, we have lost a few games. We will again reflect on certain areas only. There won't be any major changes, in the sense, everybody has been performing

-Sairaj Bahutule, Punjab Kings spin-bowling coach

AXAR FINED FOR SLOW OVER RATE

Delhi Capitals skipper Axar Patel has been fined Rs 12 lakh after his team maintained a slow over rate in their win against Punjab Kings in the Indian Premier League here.

Axar and David Miller scored counter attacking fifties to help DC defeat Punjab Kings by three-wickets and keep their slim Playoff chances alive here on Monday.

"Delhi Capitals (DC) Captain Axar Patel has been fined after his team maintained a slow over rate during the match Match No. 55 of TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 against Punjab Kings (PBKS) at the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium, Dharamshala," said an IPL media advisory. "As this was his team's first offence of the season under Article 2.22 of the IPL's Code of Conduct, which pertains to minimum over-rate offences, Axar Patel was fined INR 12 lakhs," it added.

- DC Captain Axar Patel has been fined after his team maintained a slow over rate during the match against PBKS at Dharamshala, stadium said a media advisory.

Currently seventh on the points table, DC next take on Rajasthan Royals at home on Sunday.

WELCOME BACK

SA's Shabnim reverses retirement for women's T20 WC

JOHANNESBURG, 12 MAY

South African pacer Shabnim Ismail on Tuesday reversed her international retirement as she was named in the country's 15-player squad for the Women's T20 World Cup 2026 in the UK from 12 June to 5 July.

Aiming to inspire the future generations of women's cricket in the country, the Proteas squad, captained by Laura Wolvaardt, features the 37-year-old Ismail, who last represented SA in the T20 World Cup final in Cape Town in February 2023. She brings a wealth of experience, adding 113 T20I caps and a national record of 123 wickets to the group.

Ismail will be joined by Marizanne Kapp and Dane van Niekerk, who are back after recovering from illness and a calf injury, respectively. Wicketkeeper-batter Karabo Meso also returns from a wrist injury that ruled her out of the recent T20I series against India and will link up with Sinalo Jafta in that department. South Africa had outplayed India in the recent five match series.

Kayla Reyneke is set for her first senior World Cup after enjoying a breakout international season. The former SA

-19 Women's captain ended the 2025/26 campaign with a batting average of 53 and five wickets in her first nine T20Is.

After reaching the last three ICC tournament finals, South Africa will begin their latest T20 World Cup campaign in Group 1 against Australia on 13 June in Manchester, before facing Pakistan, India, the Netherlands and Bangladesh. —*PTI*

Satwik-Chirag win in Thailand Open

BANGKOK, 12 MAY

Top seeds Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty survived a stiff challenge before defeating Indonesia's Muh Putra Erwiansyah and Bagas Maulana in a thrilling three-game opener of the men's doubles competition at the Thailand Open Super 500 tournament here on Tuesday.

The World No. 4 Indian pair registered a 21-19, 21-23, 21-10 win over Muh and Bagas in 64 minutes. The Indian pair found themselves trailing 11-16 in the first game before reeling off seven straight points to turn the tide. Muh and Bagas fought back to make it 18-18, but Satwik and Chirag held their nerve to take the opening game.

The second game remained closely fought, with both pairs engaged in long rallies before the Indians managed to take a slender three-point lead at the interval. The Indonesian pair,

however, dominated the exchanges after the break and moved ahead 17-14. Despite a spirited fightback from the Indians, the match eventually went into a decider.

In the third game, Satwik and Chirag stamped their authority, racing to an 11-5 lead at the break before cruising through the remainder of the contest.

The Indian pair will face Malaysia's Bryan Jeremy Goonting and Muhammad Haikal next. —*PTI*

AMID REELS ROW

Unauthorised access: BCCI tightens rules

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY:

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is set to introduce stricter disciplinary and access-control measures in the ongoing edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) following a series of incidents that have raised concerns within the board over security and anti-corruption protocol violations.

"We are forced to issue guidelines in this season of IPL. We saw many incidents which makes the board uncomfortable. We are in talks with IPL franchises to ensure no untoward incidents happen again. There has been lots of indiscipline in this IPL," a BCCI source told ANI on Tuesday.

The fresh development comes days after BCCI vice-president Rajeev Shukla confirmed that the board was framing new regulations to control player access and restrict unauthorised interactions in hotels, team buses and other designated secure areas during the tournament.

RR's Riyan Parag was fined for vaping in the dressing room —SCREENGRAB

Speaking in Lucknow last week, Shukla said the measures were aimed at ensuring transparency and strengthening the integrity framework around the league. "The access that the players have will be controlled; unauthorised people will not be allowed to meet the players, neither in hotels nor on buses, to ensure the transparency of the IPL," he had said.

BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia had also expressed concern over what he termed "anomalies and irregularities" involving players, franchise officials and outsiders during the tournament.

According to Saikia, the board observed several instances of unauthorised individuals accompanying team members, entering team hotels and even accessing players' and officials' rooms, actions deemed to be in direct violation of the IPL's anti-corruption protocols. —*ANI*

- Unauthorised persons were seen travelling on team buses and entering dugouts or dressing rooms. Players were caught filming social media "reels" in prohibited areas.

Bowlers have some catching up to do in T20 cricket: Dravid

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

World Cup winning former India head coach Rahul Dravid said the grammar of T20 batting has undergone a complete metamorphosis of late and bowlers have some serious "catching up to do."

Dravid, who guided India to its second T20 World Cup triumph in 2024 in the Caribbean, is marvelled at how the young guns like Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Ayush Mhatre, Priyansh Arya along with World's No. 1 ranked T20 batter Abhishek Sharma have entirely changed the approach in the Powerplay overs. "In a sense, to see the quality of batting that has happened over the last two or three years, I think the bowlers in that format of the game will slowly have to do some catching up," Dravid told PTI in an exclusive interview from Dublin, where he was unveiled as the owner of ETPL's Dublin franchise. —*PTI*

FIFA DEMANDS $100M

HC issues notice on free FIFA World Cup broadcast in India

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

The Delhi High Court has issued notice to the Centre and Prasar Bharati on a petition seeking directions to ensure that the FIFA World Cup 2026 is broadcast in India, especially through free-to-air public platforms such as Doordarshan and DD Sports.

Justice Purushaindra Kumar Kaurav issued notice to the respondents while hearing the writ petition filed by advocate Avdhesh Bairwa under Article 226 of the Constitution.

The petition states that despite the FIFA World Cup 2026 being scheduled from 11 June to 19 July 2026, no broadcaster in India has acquired the media rights for the tournament so far.

It argues that this may deprive millions of football fans across the country from watching one of the biggest sporting events in the world.

According to the plea, FIFA had initially valued the India broadcasting rights package for the 2026 and 2030 World Cups at around USD 100 million. However, due to lack of interest from broadcasters, the value was later reduced to nearly USD 35 million. The petition claims that even after the reduction, no final agreement has been reached.

The plea says the FIFA World Cup has already been notified as a "sporting event of national importance" under the Sports Broadcasting Signals (Mandatory Sharing with Prasar Bharati) Act, 2007. It argues that once such a notification has been issued, the government and Prasar Bharati are under an obligation to ensure that the event is made available to the public.

The petition also highlights India's large football audience and refers to FIFA data showing that India was among the top global engagement markets during the World Cup 2022. It further states that Prasar Bharati has the infrastructure to broadcast the tournament through DD Sports. —*PTI*

Lionel Messi included in Argentina's FIFA World Cup squad

BUENOS AIRES, 12 MAY:

Legendary footballer Lionel Messi has been named in Argentina's preliminary 55-man squad for the 2026 World Cup, as coach Lionel Scaloni begins shaping his team for the title defence following their triumph in 2022.

The Argentina captain has not yet officially confirmed whether he will take part in the tournament, but he continues to be a key part of Scaloni's long-term plans as the team prepares for the defence of their crown.

The extended squad includes several Europe-based players, such as Cristian Romero of Tottenham, Chelsea's Alejandro Garnacho and Como midfielder Nico Paz.

Romero, although currently sidelined for the remainder of the Premier League season due to injury, has still been included as Argentina assesses their options ahead of the final squad selection.

Messi remains the record holder for most World Cup appearances, having played 26 matches in the competition.

In Argentina's 2022 World Cup-winning campaign, Messi registered 10 goal contributions each, becoming the first player since Diego Maradona in 1986 to reach that milestone in a single tournament. Argentina aim to become the first back-to-back male world champions since Brazil in 1962. —*ANI*

- The Argentina captain has not yet officially confirmed whether he will take part in the tournament, but he continues to be a key part of Scaloni's long-term plans as the team prepares for the defence of their crown.